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No. 94
Sep. 2002

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I don't think I'm a very good plodder. A plodder is a person who truly enjoys taking everything in life at a steady pace. That pace might be slow or fast, but with the plodder it is, more than anything else, steady. Not me. I alternate periods of great activity with periods of sitting on my butt and thinking about everything. And I mean everything. I have a condition known as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, or OCD. I am convinced that most collectors—of comic books, or of anything—are people with some degree of OCD. It appeals to us to complete *the set*. The song in your mind goes like this: You buy a copy of *Tales from the Crypt* comics. You like it. It is an activity (reading the comic book) that only involves you and the book you hold in your hands. And you've got to hold it in your hands. Reading a comic book involves having this very personal interaction take place at a time and place of your choosing. The book is a good companion. It is your friend.

Naturally, you want more. Human nature is to want *more*. Somehow you discover that *Tales from the Crypt* ran for 30 issues between 1950 and 1954. Now you want them all. You have a goal—you want a complete set.

I started collecting comic books for one reason, to complete my collection of EC comics that I had started in the 1950s, when I was in high school. Then one day a funny thing happened: I completed the EC collection. I had them all, from the the New Trend in 1950 to the dying gasps in 1956. And the funny thing was that I still wanted to collect. The activity of collecting something naturally leads to obsessive and compulsive behavior in some people. So I started collecting other things, like newspaper comic sections and original artwork. Unlike the EC collection of 300-odd items, collecting original artwork could never be considered complete—each piece of art is unique and it appeals to each of us in a personal way. If you love Foster *Tarzan* art, as I do, then even though you have several of them, each one is unique and it is a special thrill to acquire a new one in the collection. So now I feel safe. This is a collection I will never "complete"—it is an amorphous group of drawings and paintings that changes with time, as I continue to buy and sell pieces.

Where all this is going, is—after putting out ten issues of *Comic Book Marketplace*, I find that I need to stop plodding long enough to contemplate their successes and failures. It's probably obvious to the reader which articles interest me as a collector—the ones we give to Michael Kronenberg to lay out, the ones that end up in the color section most of the time. But I am me and you are you, and never the twain.... So, with this issue we are including a survey—a scorecard, basically—in hopes that a high percentage of our readers will take the time to respond. In short, we want to know what you have liked and not liked, and we promise to be guided by your opinions. I am asking you to take the time to "rate" each major article and each regular column with a "score" of 1 through 5, with 1 meaning that you dislike the piece, 2 meaning "Ho Hum. Who cares?" 3 meaning that you sort of enjoyed it but it could have been a lot better, a score of 4 means that you enjoyed it a lot, and of course a 5 means that it was in your opinion a great article/column and you would like to see more articles/columns like this.

Having the results of this survey will help me plan future issues and try to give you what you want. In these first ten issues I have strayed from the straight and narrow path of comic books to include more coverage of things that interest me as a collector—newspaper comics, particularly Sunday sections, and original art by artists like Frazetta, Foster, Raymond, and so on. Some of you have enjoyed these little side trips and have realized that anyone who enjoys reading comic books will also enjoy reading a continuity of newspaper strips like *Tarzan* or *Flash Gordon*. Other readers dislike these wayward excursions, they say "stick to just comic books. And just Golden Age, Silver Age and Bronze Age."

My pledge to you is that I will listen and be guided by what you tell me.

So, send in the enclosed survey today, let us know what you think!

Russ

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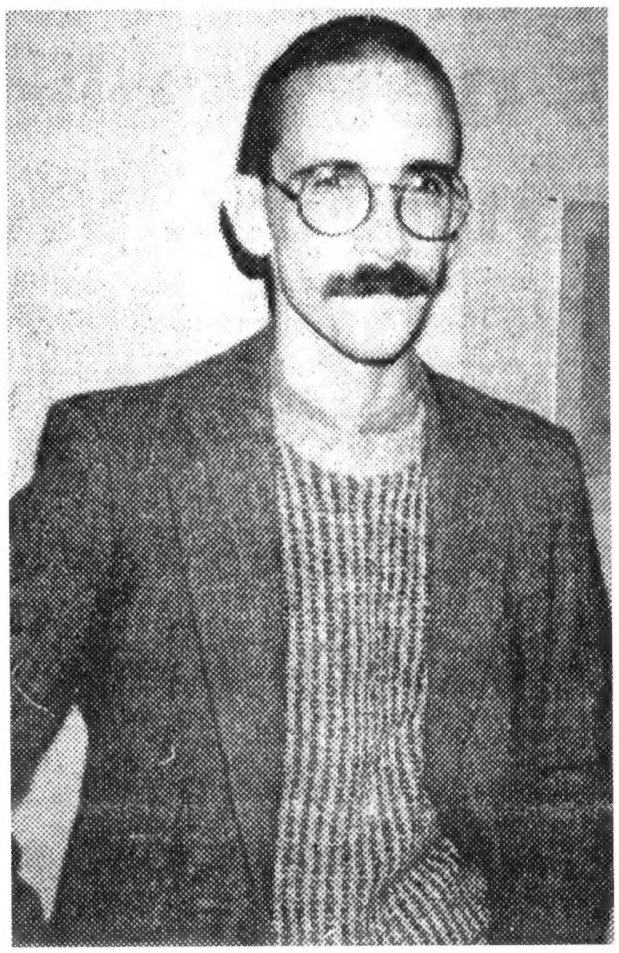
Like father, like dad

Following up on R.C. Harvey's "Funnies Farrago" column in *CBM* #91 on *Calvin and Hobbes* creator Bill Watterson:

All during the 1980s I was a regular columnist and contributor to Don & Maggie Thompson's *Comics Buyer's Guide*. In 1986 one of my self-appointed assignments was covering Ohio State University's Second Triennial Festival of Cartoon Art for *CBG*.

One of the cartoonists I spotted wandering around the exhibits, pretty much ignored by most of the attendees, was *Calvin and Hobbes* creator Watterson. The strip was only about a year old at the time, and as I recall not that many newspapers had picked it up yet. The first book collection of *C&H* strips either was about to be published, or had just come out, at the time of the Ohio State event, held in October 1986.



Will Eisner and Jim Davis were the announced "featured guests" of the Festival, as I recall, but there was an all-star roster of other cartoonists at the event, including Jerry Robinson, Mike Peters, the widow of Walt Kelly and others. Watterson wasn't listed on any list of guests, and he wasn't involved in any panels, as I recall. He was just *there*, meeting and greeting his peers, I guess.

Anyway, I spoke with him a couple times. Got a nice sketch of Calvin and Hobbes, along with an autograph. And Watterson *posed* and let me take his photo, which was one of those I included in my *CBG* coverage of the Festival. (Perhaps Harve even saw the photo in *CBG*.)

Only later did it come out that Watterson soon after practically went into seclusion, not doing many interviews, and never letting anyone take his picture. He stopped doing sketches, I guess, and Watterson never did sell any of his original artwork for the strip, as far as I know, although I think there have been a couple strips that may be in collector's hands that may have been acquired through charity auctions where the original strips were *donated* by the artist.

I was and remain a *Calvin and Hobbes* fan. I have all the book collections of the strip. I wish it was still appearing daily with new installments in my daily newspaper.

And I enjoyed R.C. Harvey's four-page *CBM* article on *Calvin and Hobbes*' "Mystery Man." I was surprised to see it in *Comic Book Marketplace*, but regardless if you receive any criticism or comments about running Harve's piece, *I* liked it! Sincerely,

Greg W. Myers
Elida, Ohio

P.S. And yes, as Harve wrote, Watterson looks just like Calvin's Dad as depicted in the strip.

Red Ryder

Re: *Comic Book Marketplace* #92, July 2002. Loved the sincere dedication to Joe Kubert. I enthusiastically read Joe Kubert's first and second interviews. I have always enjoyed Joe Kubert's work on such masterpieces like *Enemy Ace* and Sgt. Rock and Easy Company. One of Joe's greatest creations is none other than Tor. Tor is one of those characters that strikes the heart of the reader, because of his appearance. On another note, I highly enjoyed the color gallery of Fred Harman's Red Ryder. Sincerely yours,

Jerry McDaniel
Sacramento, CA

It's nice to see *CBM* getting back on track again. The Joe Kubert tribute issue was interesting and informative. While Joe's work on Hawkman is my personal favorite, it was great to see samplings of all the other comic creations of his. My biggest surprise in that issue however was

seeing those Fred Harman *Red Ryder* Sunday pages. The profile of Red on page 34, in particular, struck me as being highly similar in style to Joe Kubert's 1940s style of draftsmanship. Did Joe ever acknowledge Harman as an influence? I suspect it was not entirely co-incidental that the Harman pages were reprinted with Kubert in your expanded color section. Here's my vote that you will continue with more coverage of newspaper art! How about an entire issue devoted to Fred Harman? In the meantime you can visit Red Ryder's website at www.harmanartmuseum.com, for a look at Fred's other work at Pagosa Springs!

Dan Makara
makarakov@aol.com

Dan, several readers thought the same thing—that I included those Red Ryder *Sunday pages by Fred Harman because of the similarity of his style to that of Joe Kubert. But, no, it was just a happy coincidence. When the Kubert pages were finished, and we had a few of the color pages left, I just picked some Sunday pages to go there. But now that you mention it, maybe there was something subconscious in that choice! Sometimes the old brain is working and not even telling me about it!*

RC

It's a theory

I have theorized that Philip Jose Farmer, author of *Doc Savage—His Apocalyptic Life* and *Tarzan Alive* is the true "Father of the Multiverse." The reason why I believe this to be true is Mr. Farmer brought characters like Doc Savage, Hercule Poirot, Solomon Kane, The Scarlet Pimpernel, Phileas Fogg, Allan Quatermain, G-8, Sam Spade, The Avenger, Philip Marlowe, Lew Archer, Travis McGee, Mr. Moto, Dracula, The Shadow, The Spyder, Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes, James Bond and Fu Manchu together in one genetic family. A family that is rooted to an incident in which a radioactive meteor landed in a place called Wold Newton, England, in the year 1795. The

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meteor affected the genetic DNA structure of the family members that were exposed to the radiation. The offspring of the family that were affected produced children that either had incredible strength, high intelligence or more, that lead them to a life either fighting crime or committing evil.

Before Spider-Man and Superman brought two universes together by meeting for the first time, Mr. Farmer had already brought many characters together through one genetic family. He was the starting point for the Multiverse. The Wold Newton Universe has now expanded in which crossovers are defined at the Wold Newton Universe website. Go to their website for more information. Sincerely yours,

Paul Dale Roberts, Publisher
http://www.jazmaonline.com

Another Unknown

I have been for many years searching for an issue of *Adventures Into the Unknown* (ACG) but don't know the issue number, date, etc. This issue contains a story which was based on the *Arabian Nights* tale of Sinbad the Sailor and The Old Man of the Sea, in which the Old Man mounts Sinbad's shoulders and then refuses to dismount. Could you possibly offer any information on locating this issue (circa 1950-1965)? I would be most appreciative of any help or info you can give me.

franvin1@hotmail.com

Westerns?

I would like to comment on your fine publication. I have enjoyed every issue over the years. It has always informed me about this wonderful hobby we all enjoy. You all give us wonderful articles about old comics, new comics and everything in between. Thank you for a top-notch magazine.

Issue 92 was no exception. First off the Hawkman cover was gorgeous. That, ladies and gentleman, *is* Hawkman, and drawn by no one better to illustrate him than Mr. Joe Kubert. Amazing!

Also, I have always enjoyed "Nolan's Notebook." Michelle is very passionate about the hobby. It is always very interesting to read her column. After reading her installment in this issue, I know what I am looking for the next convention that I attend.

The Joe Kubert interview was very fun to read. So much talent and knowledge. I am happy that he continues to share with us his truly amazing gift. Thank you, Mr. Kubert.

Thank you for the color section! I loved it. Being a big western fan, I enjoyed the *Red Ryder* comic section very, very much. It would be nice to see a color section in every issue.

Any plans to have an all-western issue? I would love to see another one. I love those westerns. Best,

Steve Ogden
Germantown, MD

Well, readers, how about it? Do you want to see an all-western issue? We could feature some of those beautiful Roy and Gene photo covers on the early Dells in our color pages! By the way, let us know what you want to see in future issues! Your input is very important to us, and we do read each and every letter that you send. Let us hear from you!

RC

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The Golden Age Green Lantern

...Good, Great, Gone

by Michelle Nolan

Every now and then, some misguided comic book historian will refer to the supposedly ignoble demise of the Golden Age version of Green Lantern, claiming his fadeout was a good example of how heroes became has-beens.

After all, what other costumed hero was replaced as the cover feature of his own title by his dog? Or any other animal!

Canine capers notwithstanding, Green Lantern had actually reached an entertaining peak—thanks to writers John Broome and Robert Kanigher and artists Alex Toth and Irwin Hasen—by the time National Comics abruptly replaced the Emerald Crusader in the four titles in which he appeared in the 1940s.

Some might argue with the word "abrupt," since there were two definite hints late in 1948 that Green Lantern was as good as gone. However, until Green Lantern was replaced on the cover of *All-American* comics by cowboy hero Johnny Thunder and until GL was supplanted three times on the cover of his own title by Streak (The Wonder Dog!), he had made more comic book appearances in 1948 than any DC super-hero except Wonder Woman!

For that matter, Green Lantern and Wonder Woman appeared in more comics in 1948 than any Golden Age super-heroes except Fawcett's Captain Marvel and Captain Marvel Junior, both of whom appeared in three monthly comics that year.

In one of those oddities of the late 1940s comic book market, Superman and Batman did not appear in *All Star Comics* after their participation with the Justice Society in *All Star* #36 (Aug-Sept 1947), while Green Lantern and Wonder Woman continued to serve as JSA regulars. Otherwise, all four DC mainstays had identical publishing schedules—their own bi-monthly titles, monthly anthology appearances, and bi-monthly appearances in square bound, 15-cent anthologies. The other Golden Age star with his own DC title, The Flash, saw his own bi-monthly title cancelled with *All-Flash* #32 (Dec 1947-Jan 1948).

GOLDEN AGE GREEN LANTERN

Of course, you could nitpick the points that Robin's monthly cover-featured appearances in *Star Spangled Comics*, along with Superboy's monthly cover-featured exploits in *Adventure Comics*, gave their "franchises" greater exposure in 1948 than Green Lantern, who thankfully had no junior partner or younger version (Doiby Dickles was quite enough, thank you).

My point, though, is that Green Lantern still solidly ranked with the Golden Age greats until DC suddenly decided to phase him out. Yet I'm sure you could easily win a bet if you asked most collectors whether it was Superman or Batman who appeared in the most DC comics in 1948, a year in which most Golden Age costumed heroes were either on the way out or already gone. I'll bet not one collector in 50 would answer "neither—the correct answer

Green Lantern #35 (Nov-Dec 48), unique cover by Joe Kubert—no hero shown!

is Wonder Woman!" The Amazing Amazon edged out Green Lantern in 1948 by two appearances, since she didn't lose her monthly feature in *Sensation Comics* until the end of 1951.

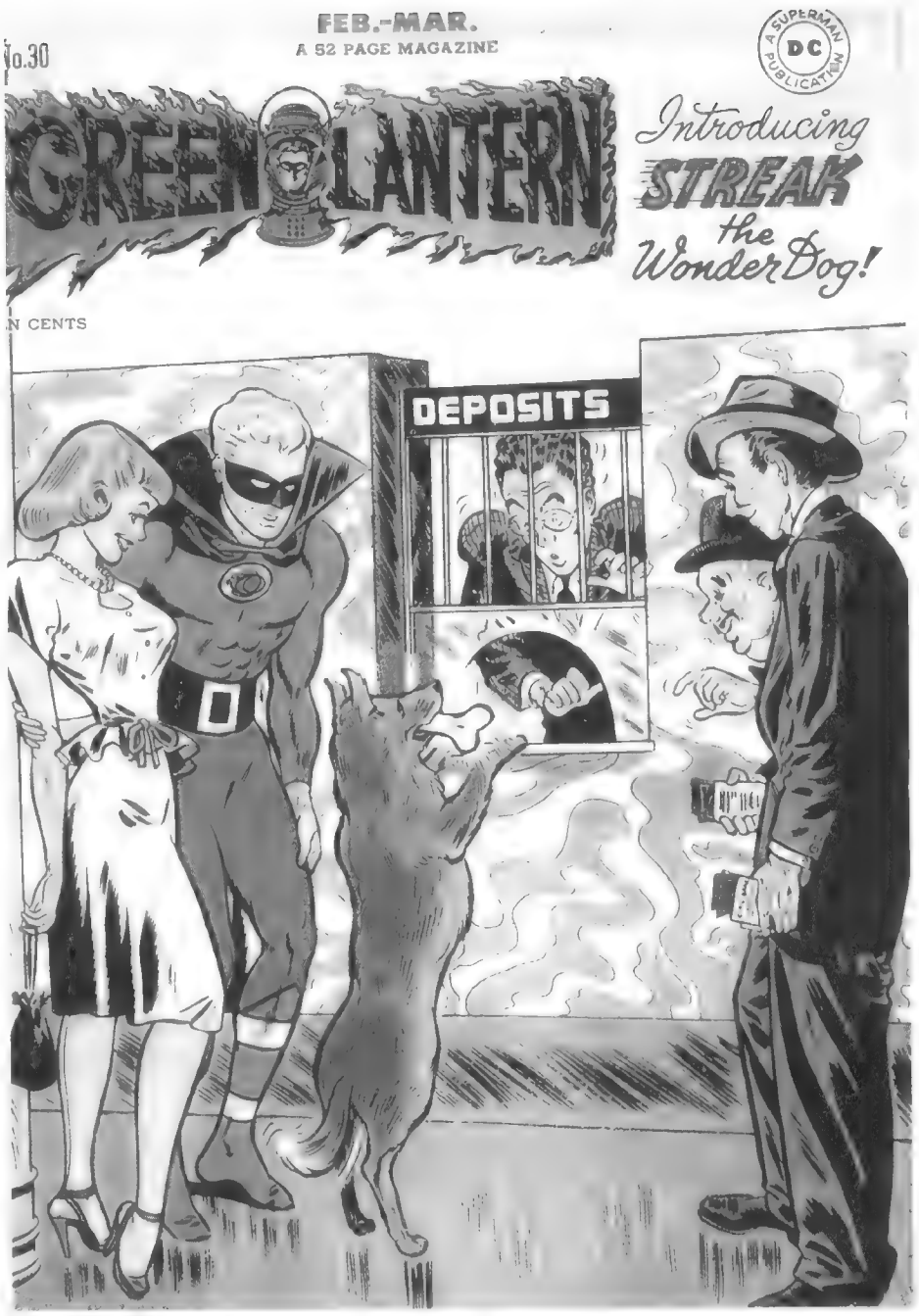
Obviously, the folks at National did not feel Green Lantern was financially worth continuing, which was sad because the hero had never been better drawn or better written by the time he was replaced on DC's publishing schedule by a combination of courageous cowboys, weeping women and animated animals.

Green Lantern and Wonder Woman have been my favorite Golden Age heroes since I first discovered them in back issues at the age of 10—shortly before the Silver Age version of GL appeared—so I freely admit a heavy bias in favor of the Emerald Crusader and his magic ring, his amazing will power and that wonderful oath.

"In brightest day, in blackest night, no evil shall escape my sight! Let those who worship evil's might, beware my power—Green Lantern's light!"

Hokey, corny, silly, over-the-top to be sure, but great fun! Besides, what other character needed will power to function, not to mention swore a nifty oath in nearly every story? Will power—talk about providing a compelling link from the world of comic-book fantasy to a quality that applied to real life!

One of my favorite childhood memories will always be the stunning sight of *Showcase* #22—with the debut of the Silver Age Green Lantern—hitting the comic racks out of the blue in the summer of 1959. I couldn't believe what I was seeing—it was like a miracle! I still have the postcard DC sent me to announce the first issue of the Emerald Crusader's own title in 1960. I figured that The Flash had gotten his own title early in 1959 as the result of the success of his four appearances in *Showcase*, so I scrawled a fan letter to DC at the age of 11, urging the same honor for Green Lantern after his three *Showcase* tryout issues.



Green Lantern #30 (Feb/Mar 48), debut of Streak, cover by Alex Toth.

I had discovered the Golden Age version of Green Lantern only one year earlier, in 1958, and I thought the character was at least as interesting as Batman, not to mention Superman and Wonder Woman. I have to admit, though, even at age 10 I thought it was extremely odd that my first exposure to the original Green Lantern—in issue #35 (Nov-Dec 1948)—highlighted the villain on the cover but did not include the hero! Joe Kubert drew the striking yellow cover (he was in his fourth year at DC and was only 22 years old) featuring Gamma, the "three-in-one criminal," in his only appearance.

I had never seen any comic book character's own title without the character on the cover, no matter what the genre. I wonder how many times that happened, at least through the 1950s?

Some years later, it boggled my mind to discover Streak—the wonder dog belonging to Alan Scott/Green Lantern—in solo action (!) on the covers of *Green Lantern* #34, 36 and 38. The Streak stories, drawn by the inimitable Alex Toth and written by the multi-talented Robert Kanigher, were actually highly cool—but I still couldn't figure out how DC expected to promote a costume hero by putting his dog on the cover!

The answer, I later came to realize, was that DC already had demoted Green Lantern in *All-American Comics* #100 (Aug 1948), in which the nicely conceived western hero Johnny Thunder corralled the cover in conjunction with his debut. Green Lantern last appeared in #102 (Oct 1948), after which the title became *All-American Western*.

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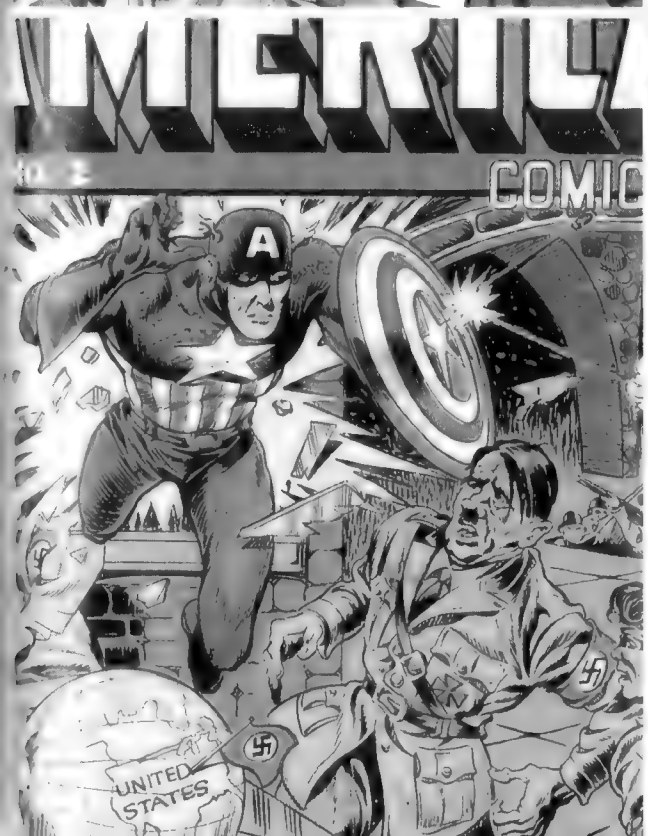
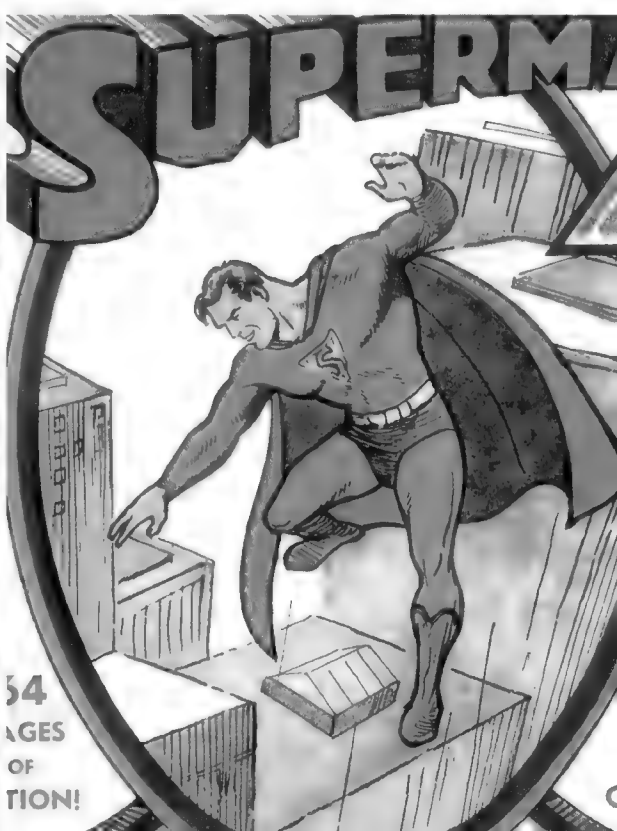




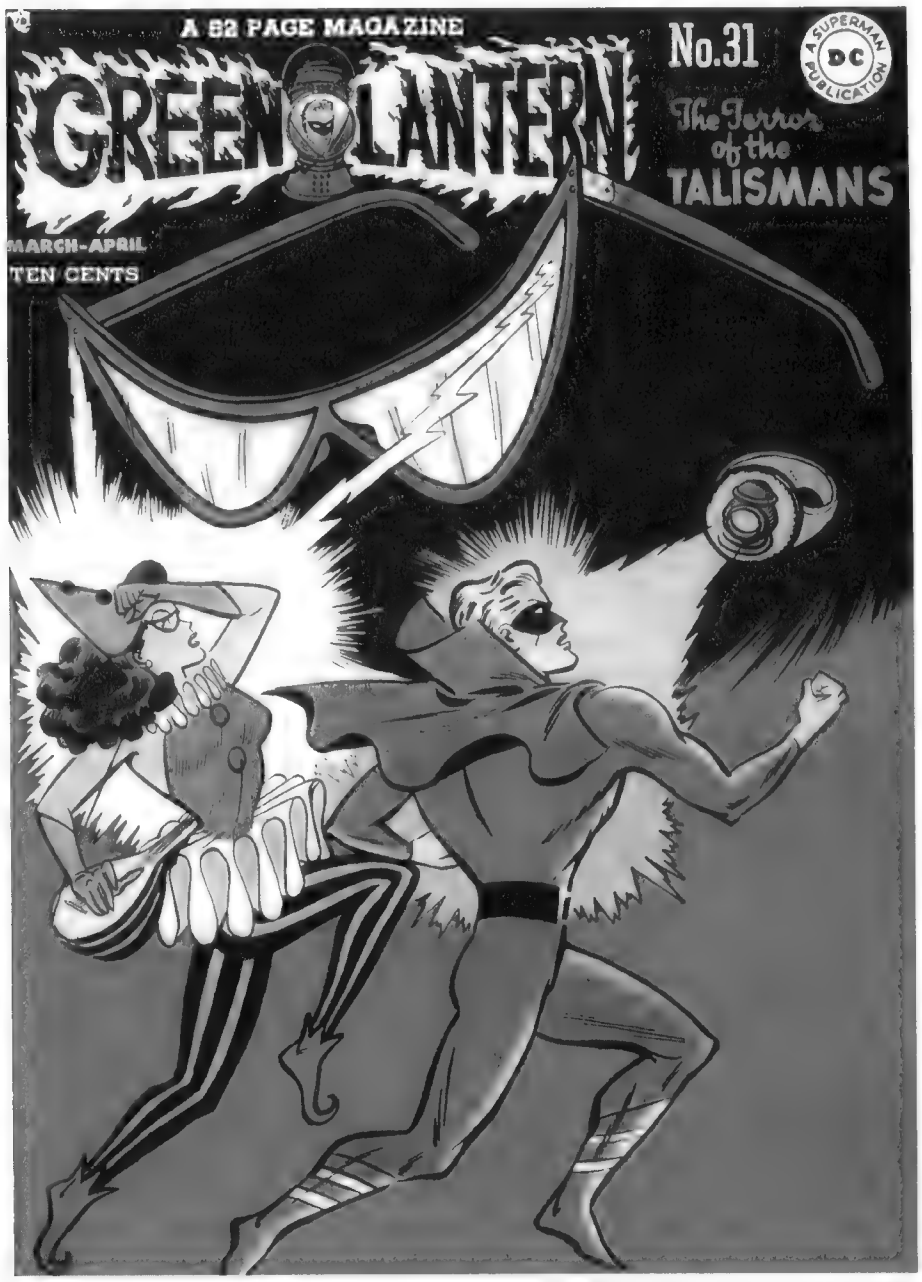
At about the same time, Green Lantern lost his spot in *Comic Cavalcade*, along with Wonder Woman and The Flash, in favor of DC's growing stable of funny animals. The heroes last appeared in #29 (Oct-Nov 1948), after which Dodo & The Frog and The Fox & The Crow led a gaggle of giggles in *Comic Cavalcade*. Actually, those two animal team-ups represented some of the funniest stories ever to appear in comics, but that's another story.

Ironically, in *Green Lantern* #35, which hit the stands one month after *Comic Cavalcade* #29, the hero's appearances in *Comic Cavalcade* were plugged at the end of one story—even though the Emerald Crusader already had lost his spot in *Comic Cavalcade*.

Green Lantern's own title ended with #38 (May-Jun 1949) and was replaced on DC's publishing schedule by *Romance Trail* #1 (Jul-Aug 1949). *Romance Trail* was one of the hybrid western/romance comics briefly in vogue at the time, taking advantage of a genre that had long been a staple of the pulps and all those "writers of the purple sage." *Romance Trail* lasted only six issues, but the appearance of *Girls' Love Stories* #1 (Aug-Sep 1949) marked the beginning of DC's long flirtation with love.

Thankfully, DC kept Green Lantern in the Justice Society's adventures in *All Star Comics*, along with five other characters who were likewise dropped everywhere else well before Green Lantern was phased out—Flash, Hawkman, Black Canary, Dr. Mid-Nite and The Atom—plus Wonder Woman. There were 11 issues of *All Star* after the end of Green Lantern's own title, beginning with #47 (Jun-Jul 1949) and ending with #57 (Feb-Mar 1951). After that, Green Lantern was once again replaced by western characters when the title became *All Star Western* with #58.

As entertaining a piece of comics history as those last 11 epics of the Justice Society are, I've always thought it was truly odd that DC continued to publish the adventures of six otherwise discontinued characters. There was certainly no precedent for that anywhere, and I'm not sure anything like that has ever occurred since then.



Green Lantern #31 (Mar/Apr 48), classic Harlequin cover by Irwin Hasen.

You might say the beginning of the end for Green Lantern developed with one of the cutest covers in comic book history, drawn by the superbly talented Toth when he was only 19 years old. For the cover of #30 (Feb-Mar 1948), Toth drew an amusing scene of Streak, in his comics debut, depositing a bone with a startled bank teller while encouraged by Green Lantern and alter ego Alan Scott's radio secretary, Molly Maynne (secretly The Harlequin). It was the sort of light-hearted cover that so often graced both of the giant-sized, 15-cent *World's Finest Comics* and *Comic Cavalcade* throughout the 1940s.

For a character who wasn't fated to last much longer, however, Green Lantern was still going very strong when Streak first bit off four-color fame. Green Lantern appeared in 41 stories in 29 comic books in 1948, and those are uniformly well-drawn, well-written and highly entertaining—indeed, some of the best stories in all of comics at the time.

That, of course, is due to the talent DC was blessed with. Toth, who became the "artist's artist" in comics, went on to far superior work, but his Green Lantern renditions displayed more potential than most other artists who started their careers as teen-agers during the Golden Age. Hasen's work was some of the most thoroughly competent in comics at the time. Broome and Kanigher, of course, were for many years among the most imaginative writers in comics history. Sheldon Mayer and Julius Schwartz were no less than legendary as editors.

Toth drew 13 Green Lantern stories (not counting his work in *All Star*), including those in *All-American* #88, 92, 96, 98 and 99; *Comic Cavalcade* #26, 27 and 28; and *Green Lantern* #28 (two), 30 (two), and 37 (one, with typically superior inks of Frank Giacoia). Toth also drew the Streak stories in *Green Lantern* #34-38—a total of 45 pages of dog-gone splendid work by a young artist with great vision, providing a hint of future greatness. Kanigher's creation of Streak, of course, was the prototype for one of DC's most underrated titles—*Rex the Wonder Dog*, who was nicely illustrated by Toth in Rex's early stories in 1952.

To the best of my knowledge, using data originally dug up by Jerry Bails, Roy Thomas and other historians, Kanigher wrote all 12 Green Lantern/Harlequin stories, creating a year-long "battle of the sexes" extravaganza. The Harlequin appeared with Green Lantern in *All-American* #89 (her debut story in Sep 1947), 91, 93, 94 and 95 along with Green Lantern #29 (three stories), 31 (a 24-page two-parter), 32, 33 and 34 (Sep-Oct 1948, the last Harlequin appearance in the Golden Age).

Except for the Green Lantern/Harlequin stories penned by Kanigher, along with a couple of other tales by Lee Goldsmith, Broome took over the writing of the Emerald Crusader in 1947. Broome followed a long run on Green Lantern by Alfred Bester, who was to gain far greater fame in writing science fiction, and a few GL tales by pulpmaster Henry Kuttner. GL creator Martin Nodell did most, if not all, of the pencils for the first 25 issues of *Green Lantern* before he went to work for Stan Lee at Timely.

Green Lantern more often than not was written and drawn with a lighthearted touch, for better or worse, until 1948, when his stories suddenly took a turn for the serious—in the sense that virtually all of DC's stories became more realistically written and drawn in the 1948-52 era. Not than anyone, mind you, could miss the light-hearted aspects of Green Lantern's partnership with Doiby Dickles! In many respects, I consider that the best overall period in the company's history, and the Green Lantern stories were a significant part of that excellence.

It's too bad that The Harlequin was written out of the Emerald Crusader's continuity following her last appearance in *Green Lantern* #34 (Sep-Oct 1948). In that story, Green Lantern discovers that The Harlequin is really FBI operative H-9, though neither learns the other's secret identity.

"Well Harlequin—next time I meet you, I'll be chasing you again—I mean so gangland shouldn't suspect..." GL tells her. "I don't mind at all, Lantern...we'll put on a good show—for the underworld I mean..." she replies.

That seemed to promise plenty of nifty plot twists. But with Green Lantern's last appearances in *All-American* and *Comic Cavalcade* concurrently on the stands with *GL* #34, and Green Lantern's title destined to run only four more issues, it was many years before Molly Maynne-Harlequin was seen in comics again.

"Green Lantern's light" was surely one of the brightest features in comics.

All-American #96 (Apr 48), Streak joins GL in action! Cover by Alex Toth.

THE Greatest COMIC BOOK ever!

(well...for this month at least)

by Mark Squirek

My friend Francis just turned six years old. He is a great kid. Smart as a whip. His mother, a native of Sweden, has made sure that he is conversant in both Swedish and English. In addition, she will also throw a third language at him, French. Six years old and he is learning three languages at once!

Francis absolutely loves when I read comic books to him. Like a lot of six year olds, Francis has a lot of questions. The ones that get me are the ones where he asks me about myself. I don't mind answering questions about Plastic Man (he LOVES Plastic Man) or Spider-Man, but when he wants to know what made me read comics or how did I buy them when I was a kid, I find myself going back 35 years looking for answers.

One day, I attempted to explain what a paperboy used to do and that during summer vacations, paperboys had to find coverage for their routes. Some of the paperboys would offer incentives if you took their route for a couple of weeks. In order to get me to cover your route, all you had to do was hand over a stack of comics.

This is how I found out about Marvel Comics. Prior to Timmy Kimmick going on vacation in the summer of 1966, I had only read DC. To me, at age 11, Marvel Comics looked shoddy. The ink ran outside the panels, the covers looked crowded, and I never really understood what was going on (I had been reading DC for at least two years; so to jump inside another company's continuity seemed too much work).

That stack he gave me ended up influencing my reading for the rest of my life. I immediately loved *Two-Gun Kid* and every Marvel Western that he gave me. Over the next few days, I read all of the 30 or so books he gave me, except one (I would have read them sooner, but I did have two routes that week).

The one book I held out on reading sat on my shelf until I had read everything else twice. I was aware of the hero, I knew his basic story (from talking to other paperboys), but I just couldn't seem to get excited about Daredevil. Finally, I took the issue up to the gas station and decided to read it under the Sohio Oil sign while I waited for the evening Cleveland *Press* to be dropped off.

Under the August sun, I examined the cover closely. It had the usual excessive Marvel hype. There was a newspaper headline giving me the jist of the issue ("Daredevil Battles Sub-Mariner"), and The Thing wanted me to join the M.M.M.s, whatever that was. The issue number was 7, so I shouldn't have too much trouble jumping on. When I stepped back from my 11-year-old pre-conceived notions, I found myself looking at a pretty neat cover.

Daredevil was falling back towards the reader, like he had just been hit. The Sub-Mariner's hand was past Daredevil and open. Did that mean he just flat out slapped Daredevil? Comic book heroes don't slap—they punch. They punch hard and they punch with reason. There was something else that seemed odd to me, yet I could not figure out what it was. I read on.

The comic may have been titled *Daredevil*, but from the opening page, it sure seemed that Sub-Mariner was the star. Wally Wood had created a fantastic undersea world. This is as full a world as any-

[continued on page 80]

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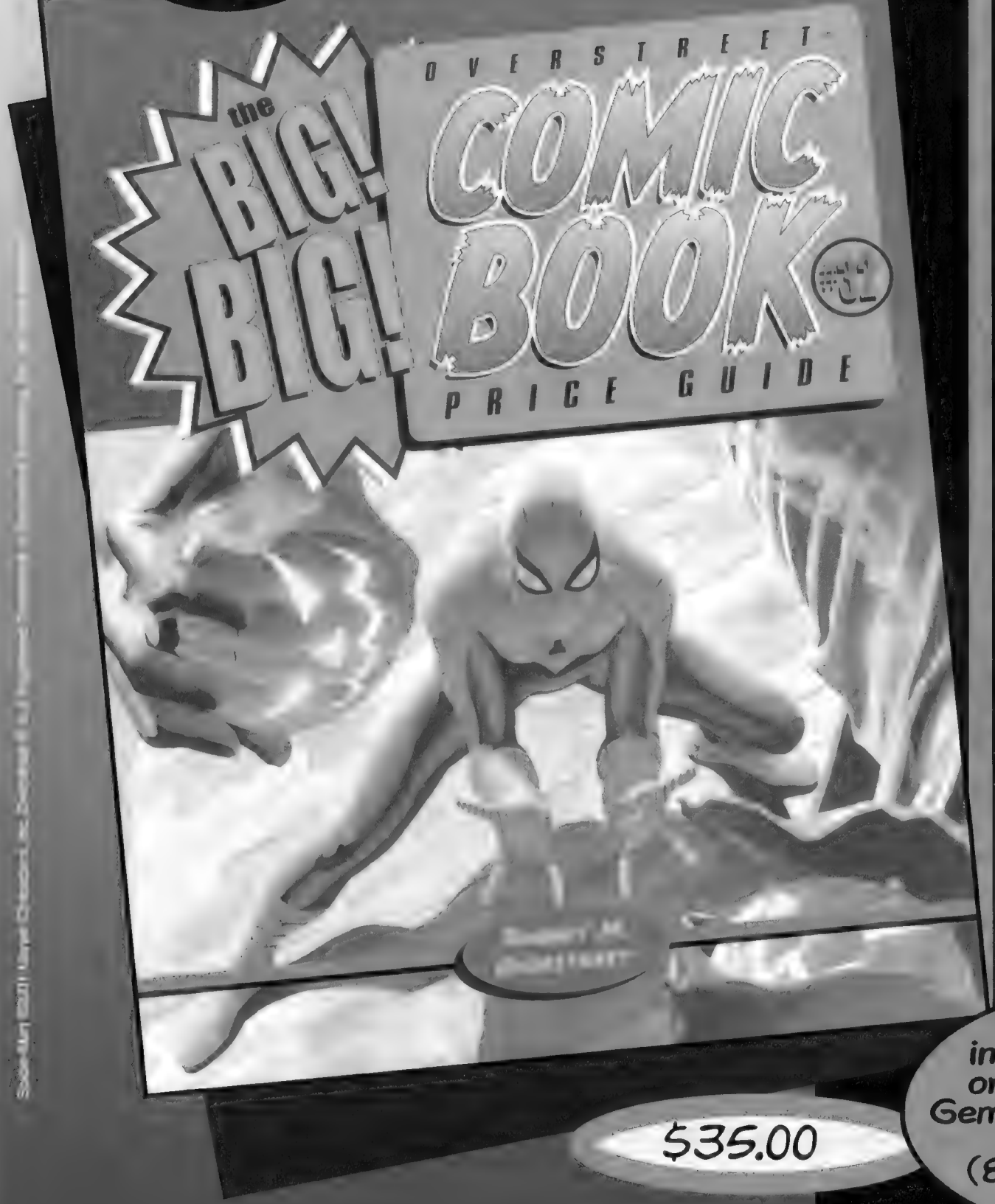

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ODDBALL COMICS

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Jeepers! Peel your peepers for a now-you-see-'im-now-you-don't Tyrannosaurus Rex—only in *Jeep Comics*, today's DINOSAUR DAY installment of ODDBALL COMICS!

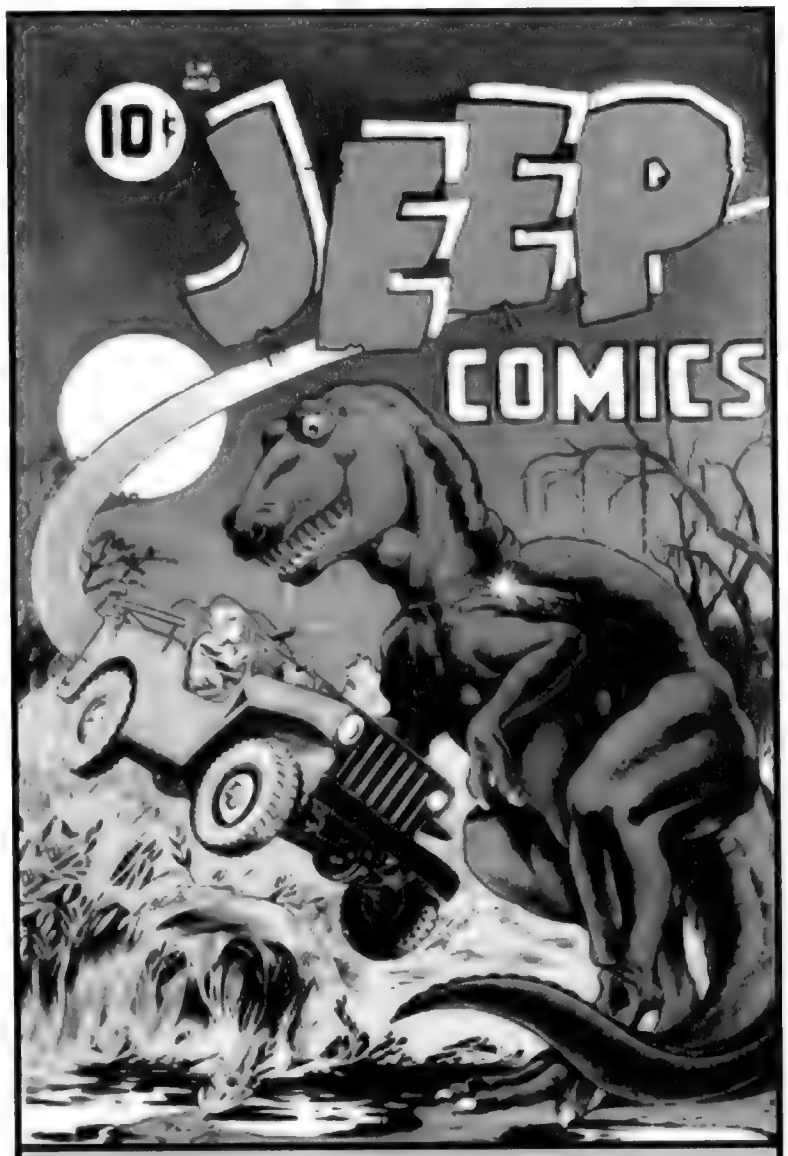
Once again, *Jeep Comics* brings up a strikingly bizarre cover scene that appears nowhere within the comic itself. The closest thing in the Jeep and Peep story "The Swamp Spooks" to this Charles R. Knight-inspired Tyrannosaurus Rex is a single shot of an alligator…and it's a fake alligator, at that!

The splash page of "The Swamp Spooks" clumsily attempts to set up the story:

"DANGEROUS THRILLS AWAIT PEEP AND JEEP IN THE SWAMPY EVERGLADES! The Florida Everglades…treacherous and evil. Into its gurgling ghastliness goes Peep…sailing blithely in the Rocket Car…without the reassuring presence of Jeep his grown-up sidekick and recently discharged hero of the Battle of Germany! He's bent on rescuing a damsel in distress in the wild swamp lands…"

After Peep's lack of good manners spoils his fun at the annual ball of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Jeep enrolls Peep at Miss Minty's School Of Etiquette. The charming Miss Minty learns that she's inherited the Everglades home of her recently deceased Uncle Malachy! Her surviving Uncle Marcus warns her that the house is haunted, but she ignores his proclamation and immediately moves to Florida! Love-struck Peep is disappointed to learn that his etiquette teacher is gone, and becomes determined to travel south to "save" Miss Minty! He dopes Jeep with a few drops of "Slumberol" (!) and hops in the jeep-like Rocket Car and flies to the Everglades. Once there, he walks in on Miss Minty as she's menaced by white-sheeted "spooks" that immediately overpower and tie up the well-mannered duo. Meanwhile, Jeep has walked (!) to the Everglades and secretly frees Peep who, in turn, unties Miss Minty and accompanies her out into the nearby swamp! The gaggle of "ghosts" turn out to be flesh-and-blood thugs led by—surprise, surprise—Uncle Marcus! It turns out that the "swamp" is actually an artificial lake, flooded by Marcus to conceal a natural deposit of pitchblend—"the stuff they get radium from!" (Yes, I'm aware that the substance is actually spelled "pitchblende"!) Then, in a move that pre-sages Scooby-Doo, Where Are You by over twenty years, Uncle Marcus and his goons disguised themselves as "spooks" to scare away Miss Minty, who the inherited pitchblend has suddenly made a very rich woman!

Other stories in this issue of *Jeep Comics* include "Solid Jackson" (featuring the "super-scientific sleuth" in an untitled story drawn by Manny Stallman), "Kogo Kangaroo" (a generic funny-animal strip) and the one-page gag strips "Simple Seaman," "FUNifties" and "Cookin' With Laughing Gas."



JEEP COMICS
ISSUE NUMBER: Vol. 2, No. 3
COVER DATE: March/April 1948
PUBLISHER:
Palace Promotions, Inc./R. B. Leffingwell & Co.
COVER ARTIST: L. B. Cole
(but signed "Jack Alderman")

ODDBALL Factoid: Cartoonist Manny Stallman, who once ghosted *The Spirit* for Will Eisner, was also known for his work on "Raven" in Tower's *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* and a long run of *The Adventures of the Big Boy*.

Pop-up Feminism at the Back of the Post: Lulu, Hazel and Marge

Little Lulu, a feminist icon in the pantheon of American popular culture, is somewhat less visible these days than Mickey Mouse and Superman (and, yes, Spider-Man, thanks to the everlasting persistence of Stan Lee and the directorial genius of Sam Raimi and the reticent angst of Tobey Maguire and the special fx of modern motion picture technology—not to mention, as is the usual practice, the imagination of Steve Ditko). Lulu may never rival Harry Potter in the sheer number and passion of her devotees, but she was once, in her heyday as a shill for Kleenex Tissues, almost as pervasive a presence in American life as Bart Simpson, whom she somewhat resembles, at least in her anti-authoritarian stance.

Surprisingly, the creator of this symbol of juvenile independence, Marge Henderson Buell, appears in few histories of comics and in none at any length. I know because I recently undertook to write a biography of Marge for the American National Biography Online, and in the safari I took through what researchers call "the literature" (everything except the Little Lulu Library, about which, more anon), I found virtually nothing of any biographical import. But I found her sons, Lawrence and Frederick, via the 1993 obituary in *The New York Times*, and through them, a biographical entry by Eva M. Maddox in *Scribner's Encyclopedia of American Lives*. Not in the "comics literature" at all. Thanks to Lawrence Buell and Eva Maddox, then, here's some biography of "Marge," as the first roaringly successful American woman cartoonist signed her work.

Marjorie Lyman Henderson was born December 11, 1904, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the first of the three daughters of Horace Lyman Henderson, an attorney, and Bertha Brown Henderson. Marge grew up on the 60-acre family farmstead (originally, her grandfather's country place; he was an accountant and Civil War veteran) on Hershey Mill Road in Malvern, attending the Friends' School in West Chester and receiving her high school diploma from the Villa Maria Convent (or Academy) in 1921.

She and her sisters drew throughout childhood, doing elaborate comic pictures for birthdays and special family events. They also sometimes improvised plays. Marge launched her

LITTLE LULU– by Marge
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commercial artistic career at the age of eight, selling drawings to her friends.

"To me," Lawrence Buell wrote me, "her early self-caricatures resemble Lulu. [She depicted herself as] a skinny kid with dark curly locks. She claimed not to see any such resemblance or continuity though."

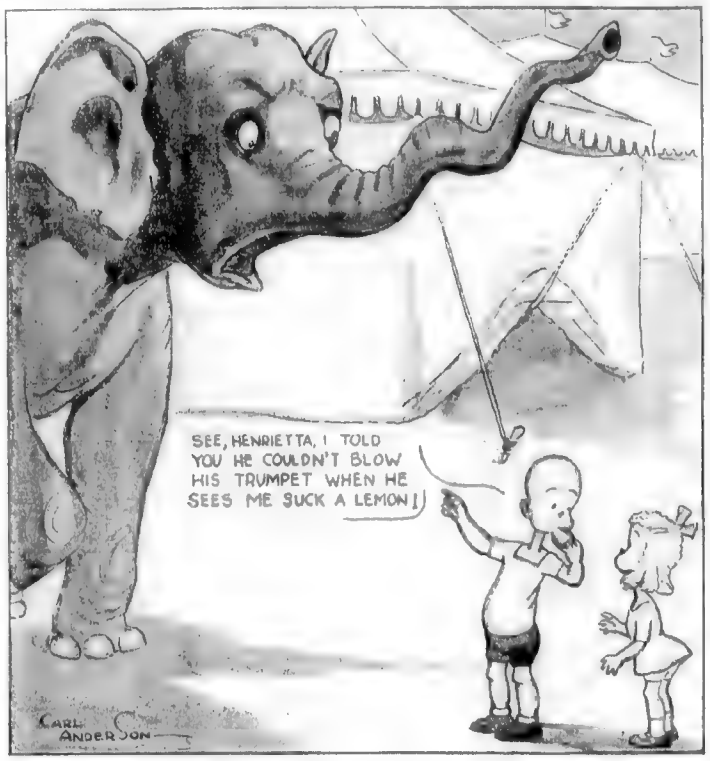
While still in high school, Marge began, at sixteen, selling cartoons to the *Philadelphia Ledger*, working out of her own studio, a converted chicken coop. An early mentor was Ruth Plumley Thompson, author of many of the Oz books after L. Frank Baum's death in 1912; years later, Marge would illustrate one of Thompson's books, *King Kojo*, and various of her short stories in magazines.

Marge as she was photographed in about 1940. This is the only photo of Marge I've ever seen.

Encouraged to pursue cartooning as a vocation, she submitted cartoons by mail and sold them to the humor magazines *Life* and *Judge* and to *Country Gentleman*, *Collier's* and *Saturday Evening Post*. By 1929, she had produced at least two regular features of flapper follies—*The Boy Friend*, a syndicated newspaper strip (c. 1925-26, by the Ledger Syndicate), and, for magazine publication, "Dashing Dot," which recorded, in verse and drawings, the mundane machinations of one of the era's curly-headed, long-legged sweet young things. For *Judge* (and perhaps others, but I've seen some in *Judge*), she also wrote humorous chatty articles, some of which she illustrated.

By the mid-1930s, Marge's cartoons were appearing in nearly every weekly issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. And then, in early 1935, she was asked to invent a successor to one of the magazine's popular recurring features, a single-panel pantomime cartoon by Carl Anderson called "Henry."

Anderson, who had been contributing regularly to magazines since the turn of the century, had started with the *Post* issue for March 13, 1932, to produce a single-panel cartoon about a funny-looking kid—bald, pot-bellied, knobby-kneed, and mouthless (and therefore mute). In the debut cartoon, a little kid is holding Henry up in his arms so his unadorned head



Carl Anderson's Henry actually talks in one of the cartoons that marked his last appearance in the **Post**.

Lulu's debut in the **Saturday Evening Post**, February 23, 1935.

An example of Marge's rendering style in the cartoons she was doing before Lulu.

touches the belly of a horse standing over both of them, and the kid says, "Is your head warmer now, Henry?"

The cartoon appeared routinely thereafter for the next three years. Then, late in 1934, a German magazine reprinted a collection of "Henry" cartoons, and the ever-roving eye of press lord William Randolph Hearst fell upon these pantomime vignettes. Hearst promptly signed Anderson to produce the feature in comic strip form for newspaper syndication with Hearst's King Features, and a daily *Henry* started December 17, 1934, with a Sunday strip beginning March 10 of the next year.

The syndication deal apparently came to fruition rapidly, and the contract undoubtedly specified that King would have exclusive use of the character. All of which seemed to come up on the blind side of the *Post*. It continued publishing "Henry" into January, well after the syndication had begun. And then, in the issue for February 2, 1935, the magazine published six "Henry" cartoons, all on a single page, suggesting that the *Post* had been notified to "cease and desist" publication of its "Henry" at once and had rushed its remaining inventory into print as soon as possible to avoid having to discard material it had already paid for.

And, while we're here, a couple footnotes. First, Henry actually speaks in one of those last six cartoons. Second, Anderson, who was now seventy years old, almost immediately hired a ghost to draw the feature, a budding young cartoonist in his neighborhood named Don Trachte. When Trachte went off to war in 1941, Anderson turned to another assistant, John Liney, who continued the strip until Trachte returned. Thereafter, Trachte did the Sunday strip and Liney the dailies and the comic book. Anderson died in 1947 after a long illness.

Hazel's first appearance in the Post, February 13, 1943.

Meanwhile, back in early 1935, Marge devised a female version of Henry, an equally silent and resourceful and slightly anti-authoritarian apple-cheeked little girl with corkscrew curls and a red dress.

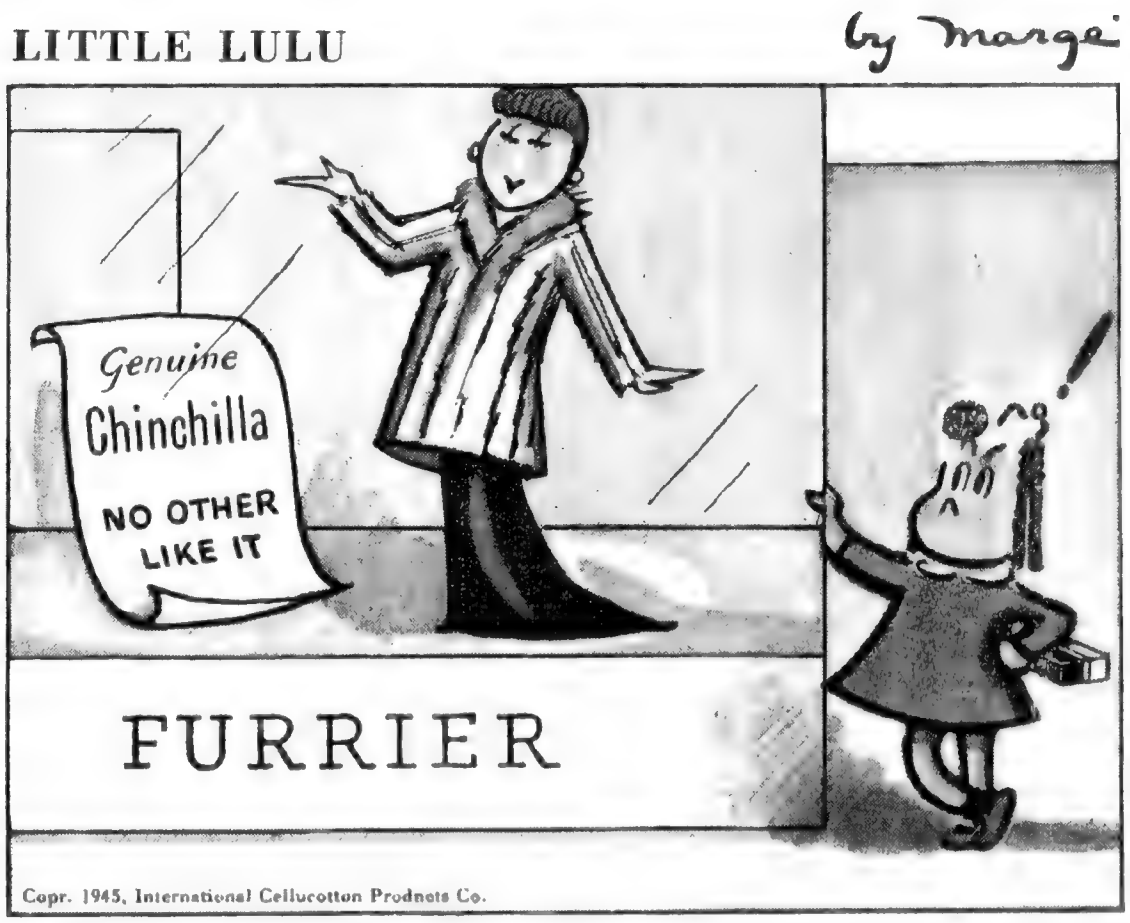
"I wanted a girl," Marge told a newspaper interviewer five years later, "because a girl could get away with more fresh stunts that in a small boy would seem boorish. Lulu's curls, I guess, were reminiscent of the way my hair looked when I was a youngster, but her face and the dress were just accidents."

Christened "Little Lulu Moppet" by the *Post* editors, this child (who was, Marge later said, a little more than seven years old and a little less than nine) debuted in the "Henry" slot on the penultimate page in the magazine on February 23, 1935 and re-appeared, every week, for the next ten years.

In her inaugural appearance, Lulu is a member of the wedding party, leading the bridesmaids down the aisle and strewing not rose petals but banana peels behind her as she goes; the bridesmaid immediately behind Lulu is slipping and falling, but Lulu displays a perfectly innocent expression.

Her subversive tendencies were revealed in deadpan pantomime over the next few weeks. In her third appearance, she stands in a line of men to attend a theatrical event for "Men Only," wearing a phony moustache to disguise her gender. She brings a cat to a dog show. In sitting for a family photograph, she grimaces and frowns while all the rest of the family smiles.

Sometimes, Lulu is simply clever or inventive. Lining up to take the required cold shower before entering the swimming pool, she wears rain gear and carries an umbrella. To take her pet dog with her on the trolley, she drapes the animal across her shoulders like the woman next to her who is wearing a fox fur around her neck. She goes to a costume party



One of the panels from Lulu's inaugural Kleenex ad, published in the **Post** on January 20, 1945, three weeks after her last **Post** cartoon. For her second career, Lulu is cuter, shorter, even a little plumper, as re-designed by Marge.

dressed as a pelican and fills the pelican's bill with more than her share of the candy and fruit.

Lulu is often an irritant to her male playmates. She persuades her chubby boyfriend to buy a loud plaid suit that comes with two pairs of pants so she can have the second pair. When she goes on a hayride with him, she ties a bundle of prickly hay around herself so he won't want to embrace her. Dressed in a Red Cross outfit, she runs his model train at breakneck speeds, hoping for an accident so she can play nurse. She enters the boys' model airplane flying contest with a bird disguised as a model airplane.

But Lulu's forte as conscience-free scamp is usually without sexist bias one way or the other. She puts an "I.O.U." in the collection plate at church. Standing next to a fisherman being photographed with his catch, Lulu holds her catch aloft—an old boot. (Or maybe, judging from the fisherman's frown, the boot was his first catch of the day, and he resents Lulu's impertinent revelation.) She sells earmuffs on the street corner while a politician's sound truck blares his virtues. In a restaurant, she annoys a waiter merely by not being able to make up her mind which dessert to order. She wears muddy galoshes to a shoeshine stand. In a library festooned with "Silence" signs, she blows her nose loudly.

Although published, usually, as a single-panel cartoon, by the end of the feature's run in the *Post* Lulu often acted in four-panel comic strips, two panels stacked on another two to form the square shape of the traditional cartoon.

Lulu was almost immediately a hit. Her popularity with *Saturday Evening Post* readers prompted the Rand McNally Company to publish a collection of her *Post* cartoons in 1936, before the feature was two years old. Five more collections would be published by David McKay: *Little Lulu and Her Pals* (1939), *Little Lulu on Parade* (1941), *Laughs with Little Lulu* (1942), *Oh, Little Lulu* (1943) and *Fun with Little Lulu* (1944).

On January 30, 1936, Marge married Clarence Addison Buell, an executive with Bell Telephone of Philadelphia, and the couple moved into a house built in 1684 on the family estate in Malvern, and there Marge enjoyed again the genteel country life of her childhood, including exercising her jumper, Waywood, and a Great Dane named Noodles. Her two sons were born on the Malvern estate (Lawrence in 1939 and Frederick in 1941). When Marge's father died in 1941, she and her family moved into the larger ancestral manse that her grandfather had built on the estate in 1904.

Composer Julia Smith wrote "Waltz for 'Little Lulu'" in 1937, and in 1939 the Knickerbocker Toy Company was manufacturing Little Lulu dolls that the *Post* and *Ladies' Home Journal* offered as premiums with a two-year subscription. In 1943, Famous Studios produced the first eight of twenty-eight Lulu animated cartoons for distribution by Paramount.

Lulu's success as a promotional ploy resulted in her most remembered role: in 1944, Marge signed a contract for Lulu to star in cartoons advertising Kleenex Tissues, the ingenious novelty of which was that individual tissues were made to pop up, one after another, as they were pulled from the cardboard box, the acclaimed "Serv-a-Tissue" dispenser. The editors at the *Post* were not happy at the prospect of Lulu popping up outside the magazine's venue, but since Marge owned the copyright on Lulu, she could do as she wished with the character; the *Post*, however, could decide what to do with the cartoon, and it did.

"We parted amicably," Marge recalled in later years.

The last official Lulu cartoon in the *Post* was published in the last issue of the magazine for 1944, dated December 30. In four panels, Lulu embarks upon the New Year. In the first panel, she drops her trusty slingshot into a garbage can, clutching a paper with New Year's Resolutions on it. In the next

panel, she sees her portly paramour with another girl. In the third panel, she takes a shot at him with her retrieved slingshot. And in the fourth panel, we see the garbage can, this time with Lulu's sheet of Resolutions in it, starting with "I resolve to be a good girl in 1945."

Considering the circumstances, we may, in hindsight, see in this finale a slightly sarcastic farewell to the *Post* (as well as a barbed prediction of future fortune).

Lulu's spot in the *Post* was taken by "Hazel," Ted Key's cartoon about a formidable domestic servant whose overbearing personality intimidates everyone around her, including, most especially, her employers the Baxters. And with that, the penultimate page in the *Post* was secured as a hotbed of feminism. Hazel was another kind of female role model, one that was nearly stereotypical—the servant who is more knowing than the master.

After leaving the *Post*, Marge's Lulu empire expanded rapidly. Paradoxically, Lulu continued popping up in the magazine—in Kleenex ads, the first of which appeared on January 20, three issues after her last cartoon. Kleenex, for the next fifteen years, made Lulu nearly ubiquitous in newspapers and magazines and on billboards and display cards in trolleys and subways and department stores; even, in 1949 and 1957, in an electronic display on Times Square in New York.

In magazine advertising, Lulu joined a distinguished company—Paul Webb's hillbilly family, Al Capp's *Li'l Abner*, Dudley Fisher's *Right Around Home* cast, as well as Peter Arno's voluptuous maidens and pompous young men and George Price's wacky urbanites.

In 1945, Marge signed a contract with Western Publishing Company for the publication and distribution of "books, comics, magazines, and other publications containing or featuring Little Lulu and various supplemental and subordinate characters which may, from time to time, become associated with Little Lulu

Hazel BY TED KEY

"There's a much simpler way to defrost those peas, Hazel."

Oddly, in Key's initial notion, the maid was incompetent and timid and wholly submissive, and in the early cartoons that he sold to a variety of magazines, he depicted her as a thin, round-shouldered and bleary-eyed woman. But Key found that the humorous possibilities in a bumbling and self-effacing maid were quickly exhausted: "Mocking incompetence and ignorance is an easy laugh," he once remarked.

And so he gradually evolved the character into the domineering Hazel of matronly mien, who would prove a font of material for comedy.

This new creation began appearing in the *Post* on February 13, 1943, where, in the kitchen, turning away from a steaming pot on the stove, she addresses the man of the house: "One more thing," she says, glaring at him, "do I tell you how to sell insurance?"

The next week, she is christened as her mistress, deferentially addressing her as she pounds away with a hammer at a rectangular mass that she holds over the sink: "There must be a simpler way to defrost those peas, Hazel."

Key realized almost at once that Hazel would not last as a one-dimensional personality. Over the months and years, he polished other facets of the character, making her fond of children and stray dogs and sympathetic to her boss when he comes home browbeaten by his boss. She's not just a maid or cook: she's also a babysitter, a cheerleader, a surrogate mother to the Baxter offspring; and entirely one of the boys whenever her favorite baseball team is up to bat, sitting herself down, uninvited but too self-possessed to dislodge, in front of the family TV set with Mr. Baxter and his guests.

"Hazel is basically a sympathetic, warm, compassionate woman," Key said, "in great need of love and giving it. Her wisecracks, her wit, and the dominating, aggressive take-charge attitude are a defensive bastion. But she's an unfulfilled woman and knows it. And when the armor cracks, we are torn by the poignancy. She doesn't stay exposed long, though, for Hazel's best defense is an offense. And an overwhelming sense of humor."

And a towering independence of spirit.

"Women who work in offices or who have hired only babysitters see in Hazel a vociferous symbol of their sex, for centuries an underdog minority group," Key said.

[continued on next page]

But Hazel's appeal was not confined to readers of the same gender, Key believes: "Any person who holds a job under a superior views her as fellow employee—the underdog, like themselves, saying or doing things they wish they could say or do (for example, telling off the boss). Anyone who revolts against the pattern, the mold, or who has ever had the desire to (and this desire is in all of us) sees something of himself in the woman."

"Hazel" appeared in the *Post* every other week or so for two years before assuming the regular weekly spot previously occupied by "Little Lulu" on January 6, 1945. Key's feature was one of several titled cartoons the *Post* was publishing at the time—Roland Coe's "The Little Scouts," about a tribe of miniature Boy Scouts and their plump Scoutmaster, and George Sixta's "Rivets," about a rambunctious little dog, and Hank Ketcham's "Half-hitch," a pantomime about a diminutive sailor (which Ketcham produced while serving in the Navy in Washington, DC), to name a few.

"Eye dropper."

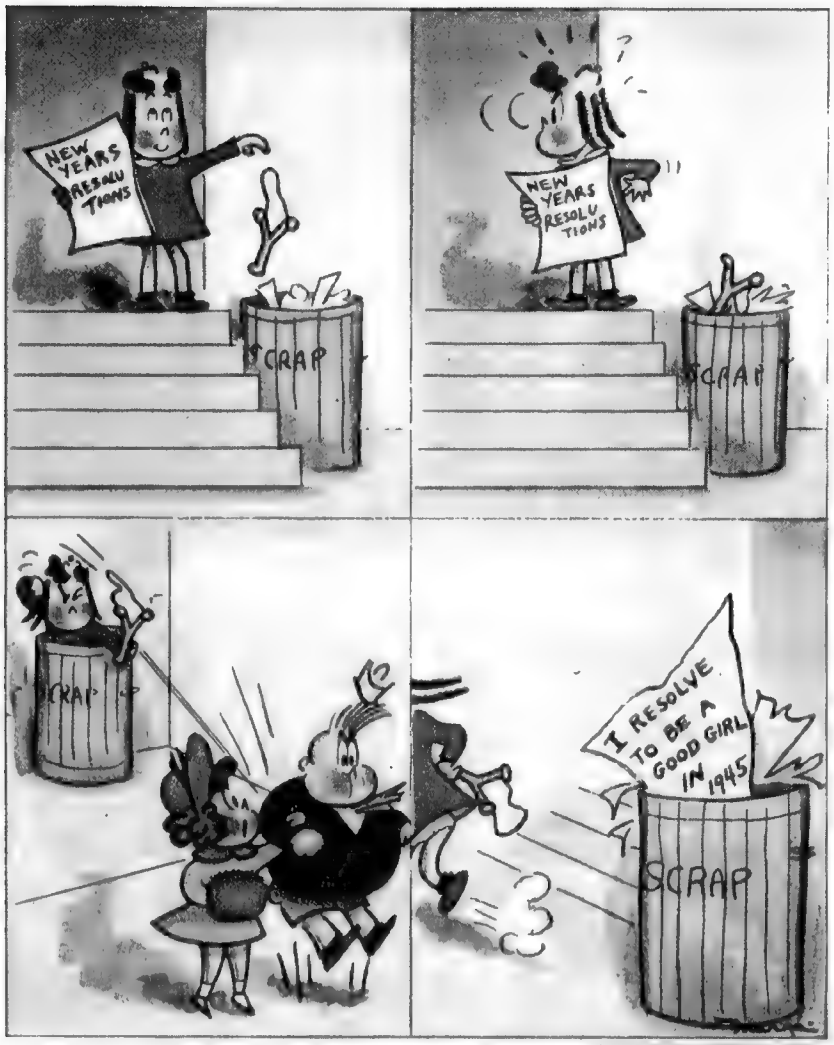
By the time "Hazel" graduated to Lulu's slot (a favored position: think of how you thumb a magazine by starting at the back), the *Post*, having lost two of its popular cartoon features to outside enterprises, had learned a lesson. Key was signed to a fiendishly restrictive contract, giving the *Post* exclusive possession of Hazel and prohibiting the character's use for endorsing commercial products. Key produced "Hazel" every week for the next twenty-four years, finally gaining full possession of the feature only when the *Post* ceased publication in February 1969. Whereupon he immediately sold the cartoon into syndication with King Features, where it has remained, stolidly, ever since.

Despite the conditions of servitude the magazine imposed, Key was granted book and movie rights, and he almost certainly enjoyed revenue from the television adaptation with Shirley Booth playing Hazel, 1961-69. (In an earlier aborted foray into TV, Thelma Ritter was slated to play the maid, with Marilyn Monroe the series executive producer; but the *Post* wouldn't permit it. Whether the publisher objected to Ritter or Monroe—or to something else altogether—I dunno.)

in stories or in pictures or in any printed form."

Lulu was launched into funnybooks with Dell's *Four Color* No. 74, dated June 1945. This book and Lulu's next, *Four Color* No. 97 (February 1946), were drawn as well as written by Western staff cartoonist John Stanley. Stanley wrote Lulu stories for her next five *Four Color* issues (Nos. 110, 115, 120, 139, 165), sketching characters and page layouts and filling the speech balloons with dialogue in cursive, and he continued for the next 12 years or so, for at least the first 135 issues of *Marge's Little Lulu* comic book when that started in early 1948 (cover-dated January-February). With the first of the continuing series, Irving Tripp became Lulu's regular illustrator, turning Stanley's roughs into finished art; Tripp, sometimes assisted by other Western cartoonists, remained Lulu's chief illuminator through the run, which ended with No. 268 in April 1984.

Working with Marge's supervisory consent, Stanley refined Lulu's personality somewhat, making her more feisty and assertive and giving her portly boyfriend a name, Tubby Tompkins (Marge had called the character "Joe"—but the name never appeared in print because the cartoon was pantomime, right?) Faced with the need for stories with plots, Stanley created the necessary conflict by pitting Lulu against her male playmates; no longer just mischievous, Lulu emerged as a crusading feminist (before the term had been invented), determinedly besting the boys at every turn. Stanley greatly expanded Lulu's milieu, adding numerous characters—Lulu's pesky little brother Alvin and the youngsters Iggy and Annie for whom Lulu sometimes babysits, and the baleful Mr. Gump, the fantasy Witch Hazel, and "The Spider," a detective persona that Tubby sometimes assumes (and then habitually foments suspicion about Lulu's father). Under Stanley, Tubby became so distinct and intriguing a per-



Lulu's final short-legged appearance as a **Post** cartoon character.

sonality that he whirled off into a title of his own: *Marge's Tubby* ran from August 1952 to February 1962, 49 issues.

The Little Lulu comic books, eventually published throughout the world in half-a-dozen foreign languages, were elegantly reprinted (in English) in slipcased hardcover volumes by Gladstone in the 1980s (and some sets of the Little Lulu Library, each containing three volumes, are still available at $130/set from our editor at Gemstone Publishing, PO Box 469, West Plains, MO 65775).

In 1950, a Little Lulu newspaper comic strip was produced by Western and syndicated by the Chicago Tribune-New York Daily News Syndicate, starting June 6 and continuing for the next two decades, drawn and written by divers hands: Woody Kimbrell (writer and artist, 1950-64); Al Stoffel (writer, 1964-69, the last three years paired with Del Connell); and artists Roger Armstrong (1964-66) and Ed Nofziger (1966-69). (The redoubtable Armstrong, who has drawn such stylistically dissimilar strips as *Napoleon*, *Ella Cinders*—simultaneously!—and Disney's *Scamp*, as well as "Mary Jane and Sniffles" for *Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies Comics* in the early 1940s, received from Cypress College in 1976 its "bicentennial award for meritorious contribution to the American culture" for his work on *Little Lulu*, an honor that makes him smile and shake his shaggy head, considering that Lulu's character had been well-formed long before he had a hand in her fate. An accomplished watercolor painter, Armstrong, tireless in his mid-eighties, conducts classes and workshops in watercolor and leads painting safaris to distant vistas overseas.)

An example of the way John Stanley "wrote" Little Lulu comic books (from the Little Lulu Library, Set 5).

Lulu's appearance remained remarkably consistent in all her incarnations, due, doubtless, to Marge's constant supervision. In her first appearances in the *Post*, Lulu seemed more nine years old than seven: she had the long, spindly legs of an incipient teenager, but as the years rolled by, Marge made her seem younger, gradually shortening legs and stature. The most deliberate modifications took place upon departure from the *Post*.

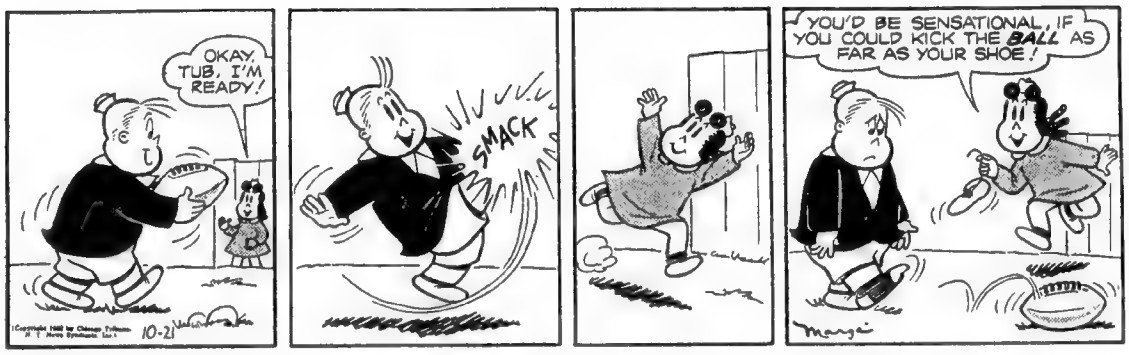
"At the time," Marge wrote years later, "I altered the appearance of Lulu considerably, changing her from a cartoon character to a real little girl. Plumper, shorter legs, wider dress, more attractive curls, big smile, and the like." The effect made Lulu cuter: shorter, her head was proportionately larger and the character more infant-like and, perforce, cuter.

"I also made some changes in Tubby at the same time," Marge said. "The new looks were carried over into the comic books when they started."

Shortly after Lulu's first comic book appearance, Marge conferred with Stanley in person in Philadelphia to ensure that the changes she'd instituted would be retained in the four-color format.

Said Marge: "It was generally felt that the three vehicles in which Lulu appeared merged with each other in both appearance and personality of the characters."

FUNNIES FARRAGO



One of the Little Lulu comic strips written and drawn by Woody Kimbrell (October 21, 1952).

By the late 1940s, Marge was managing a merchandising empire that eventually fostered throngs of products—games and puzzles, bean bags, balloons and assorted toys, greeting cards and children's apparel, candy and confections, cosmetics and toiletries, towels and fabrics featuring Lulu and her milieu, and so on. While Marge approved all the Lulu appearances from the comic book and comic strip to coloring books and dolls, she drew Lulu only for the Kleenex campaign, often assisted by one or the other of her sisters, who inked her sketches.

Initially, Marge worked out of a studio in a converted barn behind the house she and her husband moved into after marrying; later, when they moved into the larger house on the estate, she took over a room in the house as an office and studio. She occasionally hired part-time childcare but had no secretarial staff and consequently spent as much as half of every weekday at her desk. Her son told me that she sometimes got up in the middle of the night to attend to some nagging business loose end.

In 1971, Marge sold her rights to Western (which dropped "Marge's" from the comic book title with No. 207) and retired, moving shortly thereafter to Oberlin, Ohio, where she died of lymphoma twenty years later, on May 30, 1993. Her husband died five years later, on November 20, in Massachusetts, where he had moved to be closer to his son Lawrence.

Although many women grew up with the assertive and self-reliant Lulu as a role model, Marge was not, according to her older son, a crusader for women's rights. Not in the deliberate way we ascribe to champions of the feminist cause these days.

"She knew she had created a feisty character and liked it," Lawrence told me. "But she was not a conscious feminist. She didn't see life that way. She was like the mid-19th century women writers of best-selling novels who modeled (and imagined) a sort of feminism but were not feminist activists.

"As for Lulu per se," he continued, "MHB always took the view that the purpose of the cartoon was amusement and pleasure, not to convey a message. She would have liked Hemingway's quip: 'If you're looking for messages, try Western Union.'

"Let me add," he said, "that she was also very proud to have created a popular nonviolent cartoon. She disliked media violence intensely, even something like Superman. So clearly, Lulu did consciously reflect social-moral values in at least this one respect. She and I had some fascinating discussions about such matters in later years."

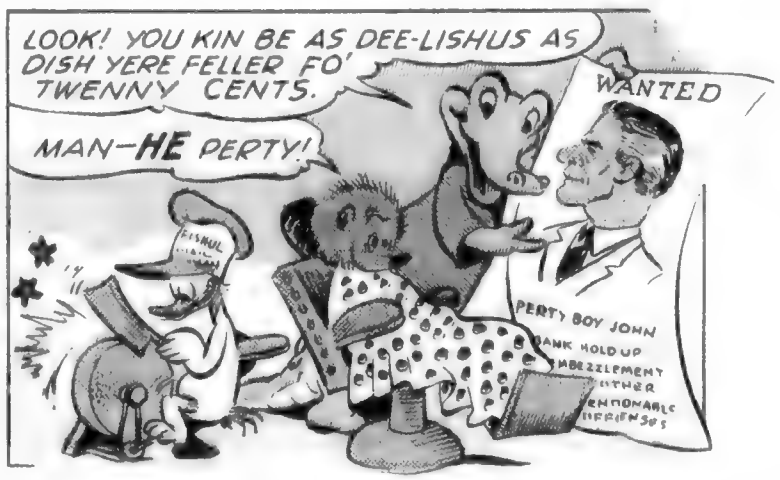
Growing up, Lawrence and his brother were quite conscious of their mother's fame, he said, "and of her desire to avoid publicity. The family was well aware that at a certain point (in the late 1940s), Lulu comics were outsold and out-distributed only by Disney. She didn't boast about this, though—never. She always looked upon her fame as an amazing happenstance.

"Lulu was a household word among all our friends. They read the comics, too—boys as well as girls. When they came over to visit, sometimes my brother and I felt upstaged by them wanting to spend time reading through the old archives."

Returning to the subject of his mother, Lawrence said: "She was one of the most extraordinary human beings I have ever known in her combination of fun-lovingness (droll storytelling gifts), responsiveness to other people, and proactive concern for others. She was also a quietly but deeply spiritual person, the only person I've ever known who was both puckish and saintly. A zany sense of humor never at anyone else's expense, morally centered and serious but never self-righteous or doctrinaire.

"It's always nice," he concluded, "to find people who've made it to the very top of their field who are also by any imaginable criterion thoroughly admirable human beings."

Among the things that pleased Marge most, he told me, was being an entrepreneurial success as a woman cartoonist. And she was surely that. Others of her sex had cartooned with much success before her or contemporaneously with her. But Marge exceeded the usual accomplishments of a professional cartoonist. And she did more than create a merchandising empire unprecedented for a woman cartoonist: whether she intended it or not, she also created an icon for America's girls and young women.



Walt Kelly caricatured Lulu comics' John Stanley in a Pogo story in **Four Color** No. 105.

And, gang, next time, if the shepherd doesn't rack 'em for badgering the flock at the mouse house, we'll go from sugar-and-spice to toads. And rats. And, even, moles.

THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS INTERVIEWS

George Perez: wrap-up

MARV WOLFMAN on George Perez

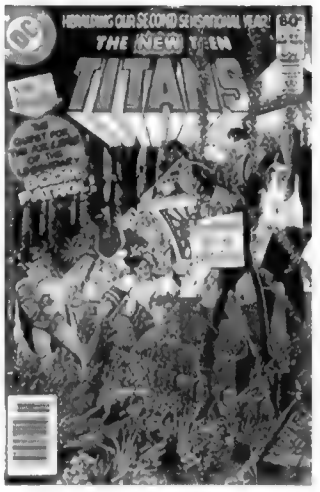
Comic Book Marketplace: When did you first become aware of George's work?

Marv Wolfman: George was doing work at Marvel while I was an editor there. He was working with Rich Buckler, if I remember correctly.

CBM: When and how did you and George first meet?

Wolfman: I have no memory of when we met—he was at the office, I was there, too. He was going to be doing work on the black and white books and I was the editor of them.

CBM: What are the best things about George as an artist, and as a collaborator? Is there anything you might change, if given the chance, about his work or his approach to working together?

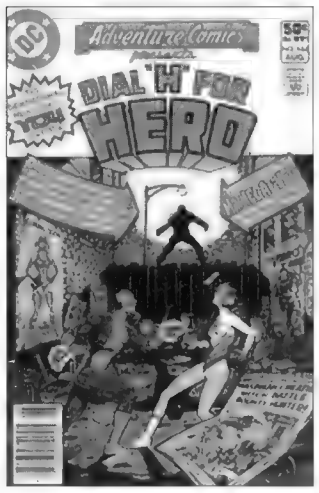


Wolfman: George is an incredible collaborator, filled with ideas and a willingness to work with others. He makes your writing look great because of the work he does. There is absolutely nothing I would change other than the wish he could turn out five times as much work so the

conducted by Bill Baker

Editor's note: Our multi-part interview with George Perez concluded in* CBM *#91, but there were some comments from some of his more high profile collaborators of the last twenty years that we weren't able to include.* CBM*'s Bill Baker talked with Marv Wolfman (who not only collaborated with Perez on a long run on* New Teen Titans *but also worked with him on* Crisis on Infinite Earths*), Jim Shooter (who worked with Perez on* The Avengers *during the popular "Korvac Saga" storyline), and Kurt Busiek (who revitalized* The Avengers *with Perez and is working on the upcoming* Avengers/JLA *with him).

industry could benefit from more of his art and so I could work with him again.



CBM: How did you two start working together?

Wolfman: We started working together as editor and artist. Later we did a story at Marvel as writer/artist (if I remember correctly) and then I asked him if he'd like to work with me on *Titans*. From there on it's history.

CBM: What do you see as the high point—let's say both a run and a particular issue—of your work with him? Why, what about that particular work is effective, or makes it stick out in your mind as especially satisfying?

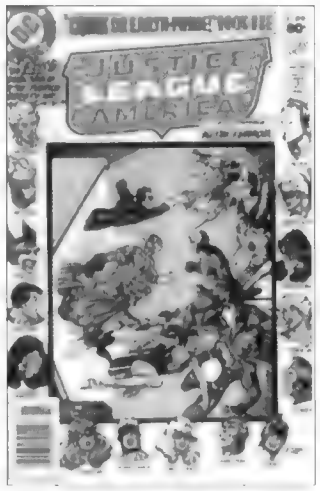
Wolfman: The high point was, of course, *Titans*. Probably issue #50. It worked so well. *Crisis* was more of a job that existed to accomplish certain goals whereas *Titans* was more of two creators doing something that, we hoped, would have major and long run impact. Once George moved to Queens, NY, and we plotted the stories together, we truly found we had one mind when it came to *Titans*. It was a wonderful experience and perhaps the best direct partnership I've ever had in comics.

CBM: Well, is there anything you two created that, personally, you're not entirely happy with? Again, why, and how would you change it in hindsight?

Wolfman: I didn't like my work on *History of the DC Universe* because I should have fully scripted the book first and then given the script to George. The way we did it meant that George first drew the two issues based on my outline and then I had to put in the copy afterwards. Whereas that worked wonderfully in a comic, it meant I had to physically copy count how much I could put into the spaces George left for me whether or not the information would fit. Therefore my copy was forced and unnatural. This being a 'history' book it should have been fully written out first to get in all the pertinent information and then drawn, not the other way around.

CBM: Is there a project that you always wanted to do with George, but never happened?

Wolfman: I always wanted to do a certain graphic novel called *Janus* with George. We just never got the chance to do it. I would still love to do it, but he's pretty tied up. Also, I would still love to finish the *Titans* graphic novel that George drew approximately 80 pages of. It would mean him having to finish the last 20-30 pages but it would be our swan song on the characters and would allow the readers to see all the wonderful work he's already done.



CBM: If you were asked to point out the single greatest contribution that George has made to comics, what might you cite that as being?

Wolfman: Although George's art is unbelievably great, I think it's the enthusiasm he shows in his art that is most important. Even when George wasn't as great as he is now that dedication shown through. It's the way all artists—and writers—should approach their work: giving 100% all the time.

JIM SHOOTER on George Perez

CBM: When did you first meet George, and what was your impression of him then?

Jim Shooter: I would have probably first met him in 1976, after I started working at Marvel, and what I remember of him then was that he was just drawing a phenomenal number of pages a month. He was doing four titles at the time. And the thing was, they were the kind of titles that artists generally hate to draw, because each title had a lot of characters in it. I think, if memory serves me right, it was *The Inhumans*, *The Avengers*, *The Defenders* and something like *Logan's Run*. But they all had a zillion characters, and were difficult to draw. "The more the merrier!" for George.

CBM: But what was amazing, then as now, was the fact that not only was he able to draw all those characters, and fit them all into each panel, but they were rendered so dynamically, too.

Shooter: Actually, he wasn't a great draftsman, yet, in those days. He drew pretty well. But the thing that really made him as an artist was his fanatic attention to detail, and how he enjoyed working with all of these characters,

and doing just what you said: Getting them into the panels, and making them exciting. And then, of course, he learned to draw better and better as he went along.

CBM: How did you two work together? I believe it was on *The Avengers*.

Shooter: Yeah. George went through a period there where, for various personal reasons, he slowed down for a while, and was doing fewer titles. And I had actually gotten to know him, and we kind of became friends. I was going to be doing *The Avengers*, and George, of course, loved *The Avengers*. That was one of his favorite books. And when he needed something to draw, and I was doing *The Avengers* [so I thought,] "Great!"

So he took the assignment, and being George—he wasn't just a guy who waits for the plot to come and draws what you tell him—one of the first things he did was come in [to the Marvel offices] and say, "I want to do some amazing cosmic epic. I want to guest star everybody in the Marvel Universe, and I want to have this giant story!" Well, George is a great artist, and I was going to do my best to accommodate him, so I cooked up "The Korvac Saga." He contributed to it—actually, I think his biggest contribution was he insisted I use these characters and those characters! [Laughter] He wanted just armies of characters in this story.

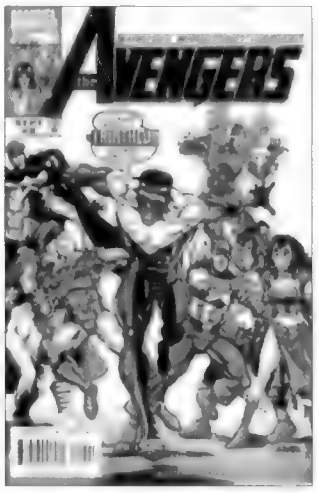
So, I did that. I would write the plots, give them to George—he was actually a little annoying, in a way, because what would happen is I would very carefully craft these plots, as I do, and George would read it once, throw it over his shoulder, and draw what he wanted. [General laughter] I think, for a lesser artist that would have been a problem. But with George, the stuff he came up with was so good it was hard to argue with. And he never presented me with any unsolvable problems, because he's a good storyteller. So even if he deviated a little bit here and there from what I intended, what he did made sense, and you could work with it. And then, sometimes, it was better than what you thought of, so [that was good].

Anyway, it was good, and the only problem I had with him was that he bailed out on me! [Laughter] He got me stuck in the middle of this story, and then he left! [It was] like, "Oh, thanks George. Here I am in the middle of the Sahara desert, and you're off to a trip to Paris or something!" [More general laughter]

Actually, what happened was that at this time the competition between Marvel and DC was pretty intense, and he got an offer from DC to draw *The Justice League of America*, which was, I would say, marginally ahead of *The Avengers* on his all-time favorite list. And also I think they offered to revive the Teen Titans at the same time. In any case, he wrote me a lovely two or three page letter basically saying, "Look, I'm sorry, but I've been waiting my whole life to draw the Justice League." And I thought, "Well, I only want him to be here if he absolutely wants to be here. So, God bless 'em, let him go!"

So he went over there and worked there for…I don't know. I don't know if he ever worked for Marvel again after that.

CBM: You never did have another chance to work with him again after that, did you?



Shooter: No. He went to DC, and he was pretty much there. If he ever did anything [else] for Marvel, some special or one shot, I wasn't the writer.

CBM: Any last thoughts on George, or his work?

Shooter: Well, I think George is terrific. He's unique. He has a unique style, and he's a terrific artist. And I watched him kind of mature. I watched him start off as sort of all raw power, and then learn the finesse, too. I honestly haven't seen anything of his recently, but I betcha it's pretty good.

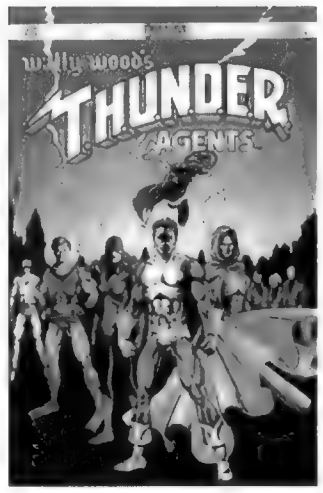
KURT BUSIEK on George Perez

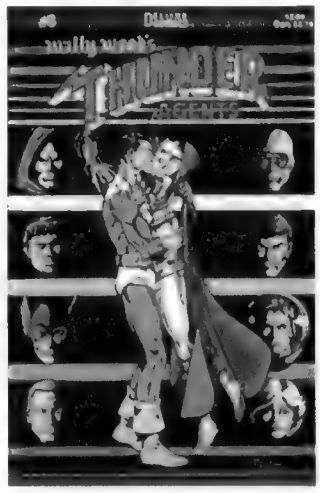
CBM: Did you have any qualms about working with George on the re-launch of *The Avengers*?

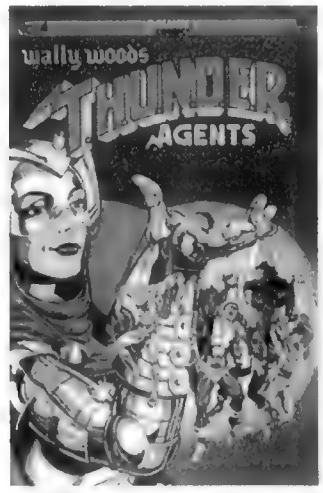
Kurt Busiek: I don't know that I'd call it "qualms," since I had no hesitation whatsoever, after being offered the book with George as penciler, in saying, "You bet! Whoo-hoo—I am so there!"

I was a little overawed, perhaps, by the fact that George had been "the" Avengers artist back when I was a teenag-

er reading the books—I started reading *The Avengers* regularly less than a year before George started drawing it—and so I was worried about the writing measuring up to such classic artwork. But George had wanted someone whose work he respected and who knew Marvel history, and specifically asked for me, so that went a long way toward making me feel at home.







CBM: What are some of the special qualities that George brings to a character-intensive book like this, and in what ways did you use those abilities to their full advantage?

Busiek: George not only loves to draw large casts—the bigger the better—but he's also capable of treating every character like an individual. He makes sure to give each character his or her own distinctive face and attitude, so no matter how big the team, it never comes across as just a gang of costumes. And George is enthusiastic about drawing anything—a fantasy setting, a military base, a casino—whatever the story calls for, he'll go all out in making the setting and story the most it can be.

I would throw challenges at George, like a full-page spread with 55 Avengers villains on it. He'd trump me by adding 14 more. So I knew I could ask for anything, and I'd get it—beautifully staged, beautifully realized, and peopled with individuals.

So I did. As of issue #2, I was asking him to design new costumes for dozen of Avengers. By #22, I was asking for thousands of Ultrons. And George brought it all to life, and beautifully, on the page.

What I've told people is that once I plotted a story, I generally felt it was a pretty good superhero story. But once it came back from George, it was an Avengers story—he put the majesty on the page that made it the Avengers.

CBM: What is the one thing you're proudest of in your run with George on *The Avengers*? Conversely, is there anything you wish you two could re-do, or didn't get to do?

Busiek: There are high points, like the "Ultron Unlimited" story, but I think what I'm proudest of is the revitalization of characters like Warbird and Hank Pym, and the reestablishment overall of the Avengers as Marvel's varsity team, as the first line and front line against anything and everything that threatened the world. They'd been that for a long time, but hadn't really felt like it, and I'm proud that we managed to bring that feeling back.

I do wish we could take our first year and spread it out over about six more issues, just to ease the frantic pace and have room for more of the character stuff we wanted to fit in. And I'd like to have gotten to a new "Zodiac" story.

CBM: What makes George the perfect artist for the upcoming *JLA/Avengers* project?

Busiek: Well, first off, George is the quintessential big-team super hero artist, so right there he'd have dibs on it, even if he wasn't one of the top artists to have drawn either team, and had well-remembered runs on both.

But the enthusiasm, energy and skill he brings to such a big project are what really does it. Everybody looks good, everybody looks right, the teams both feel like they ought to and the storytelling and spectacle are over-the-top great. What more could you ask for?

CBM: Any final thoughts on George Perez the artist and, perhaps more importantly, the man?

Busiek: George is one of the most tireless and giving guys I know—knocking himself out doing con sketches for charity, supporting the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund and more. His good humor is infectious, and wherever he is, he lights up the room—his personality's as loud and as cheerful as his shirts.

I've never known him to do anything—as an artist or as a person—less than 110%.

OUT OF THE TV NIGHT... THE DELL DISNEY ZORRO

by David Ainsworth Cook

Out of the night when the full moon is bright—a thunderclap. The whishing phwik-phwik-phwik as a blade carves a "Z." That corny silhouette of a fox on a clay wall. Such was the montage of sound and image that began seventy-eight half-hour episodes on ABC-TV from September 1957 until September 1959. Originated by Johnston McCulley in August 1919 for *All-Story Weekly*, Zorro began his career in pulps as The Curse of Capistrano. His name was Spanish for "the Fox." Douglas Fairbanks Sr. made Zorro a movie star in 1920, and so he continued into novels, film serials, and inevitably to comic books.

Dell Publishing introduced Zorro in sequential art form in *Four Color* #228 (May 1949) in "The Mark of Zorro" to coincide with a postwar re-release of the Tyrone Power film of the same name. With its bright yellow cover, "The Mark of Zorro" shared the same basic look as other costumed hero comic books of the 1940s. Over the next seven years Dell published six more Zorro titles with such pulp-style names as "The Return of Zorro," (*Four Color* #425, Sep 1952), "The Sword of Zorro" (*Four Color* #497, Sep 1953), "The Mask of Zorro" (*Four Color* #538, Mar 1954), "The Hand of Zorro" (*Four Color* #574, Jul 1954), "The Quest of Zorro" (*Four Color* #617, Mar 1955) and "The Challenge of Zorro" (*Four Color* #732, Oct 1956). As with many Dell titles around then, the covers quickly changed from line artwork to the characteristic paintings.

OUT OF THE TV NIGHT...

With the advent of the 1957 television series, the painted covers gave way to photographs of the title star, Guy Williams, beginning with *Four Color* #882 (Feb 1958) under the title "Walt Disney Presents Zorro." That premiere cover left much to be desired. Williams just stood there presenting a somewhat ill-focused sword toward a box proclaiming, "Scourge of Military Tyrants...Gallant Defender of the Poor." However uninviting that cover may have been, all anyone needed to do to be hooked on Zorro was to open the book, and Guy Williams' fan following was already sufficient to expect that. Once open, the photo on the inside cover, though black-and-white, was far more exciting than the front cover: Zorro, leaping over a wall of boxes, laughs in the faces of a dozen guards as they struggle to keep their pants up! A glance at the first page clinched it; there was the inimitable work of Alex Toth.

Toth had moved to California after leaving the army, to look for work in the land of automotive design. His assignment as the Zorro artist seemed like one of those things ordained by fate. Toth had done other TV related books for Dell before drawing Zorro. In fact, he seemed to be Western Publishing's main TV-tie-in artist, even rendering such material as *Four Color*'s "The Real McCoys" (first two issues) and "The Lennon Sisters Life Story." Toth was the definitive Zorro artist. The line character of his strokes had even more vivacity than Zorro's sword and his staging seemed infallible. The first page of that Disney "Zorro" had all the atmosphere of 1820's Spanish California, and the duel on the deck of a ship, which seemed simultaneously below the title yet above eye level, had all the swashbuckling dash and verve of the Errol Flynn films. Phwik-phwik-phwik. Inside the story Toth used elongated panels, arpeggioed action sequences, and unexpected shadows—oh, those leaves and vines and branches—indicating objects and settings beyond the visible limits of the page.

The second cover, *Four Color* #920 (Jun 1958), was much better, with its blood-red backdrop and lunging Zorro. All of the first seven issues in the Disney run adapted two of the weekly episodes in each book. This had both good and bad aspects.

Toth was the artist for the first six consecutive Disney issues, from *Four Color* #882 through *Four Color* #1003 (Sep 1959). Unfortunately for Toth—and for the comics fan—the pressure to please television writers and editors changed the style and staging of each subsequent story, flattening them for the most part, until the beautiful mystique returned in *Four Color* #1003 for "The Marauders of Monterey" (which corresponded to "Welcome to Monterey," the second season change of venue in the video series). That issue had the well-staged opening page, the ever-present full moon (dangerous condition for Zorro to work in), the inky shadows, and gnarly branches that were the stuff of the best of Toth's work. After a five-issue absence, replaced most often by Warren Tufts who gave Zorro a western genre look, Toth returned for one last

LET HIM GET TO THE BELFRY! HE CAN GO NO FURTHER!
NOW—IF MY PLAN WORKS!
ZORRO REACHES THE BELFRY AND LEAPS OUT...
THERE HE IS!
SO! THEN ZORRO IS AT THE END OF HIS ROPE! HAHAHA!
THERE!

story, "The Runaway Witness," in "Walt Disney's Zorro" #12 (Dec 1960), but that story also had more of a western style than his previous material.

At this point comes the question, "Where did the red lining in that cape come from?" Toth has claimed that it was part of the Williams costume (see the second volume of the Eclipse graphic albums). No such thing. Not on fifteen full color photo-covers, in Western Publishing's own *Walt Disney's Magazine*, nor in the Sawyer/GAF Viewmaster reels, never once was there a hint of red. In all fairness to Toth, the red lining also appeared in John Steel's illustrations for the Golden Books. The Walt Disney costume actually was all-black and fairly matte, especially when compared to the flashy western outfits of the Republic serials.

The comic books were only a portion of the Disney marketing strategy for Zorro, albeit a noted part (see "The Mark of Zorro," *Life*, volume 45, #7, August 18, 1958). The Guy Williams show was given the same treatment Disney had already tried out on *The Mickey Mouse Club* and "Davy Crockett," but with a little reserve. The Crockett blitz swamped the country with coonskin caps and cork bullets and made millions in a fortnight but reached burnout in little more than a year. With some guidance from Mitchell Gertz, the agent who had introduced Zorro and Johnston McCulley to Walt Disney, the studio was able to maintain the masked avenger's sales for ten years. The original sponsors of the show were 7-Up and AC Sparkplugs. Premiums included such items as pin-back buttons and "autographed" photo ads, like the one on the back cover of alternate printings of *Four Color* #1003.

YOUR EXCELLENCY, IT IS WITH FEELINGS OF PROFOUND GRATITUDE AND HUMILITY THAT I GREET YOU!
IF YOU DON'T MIND, COMANDANTE, WE WILL DISPENSE WITH THE FORMAL SPEECH!
WE HAVE HIM THIS TIME! ONWARD, MEN!
CLANG

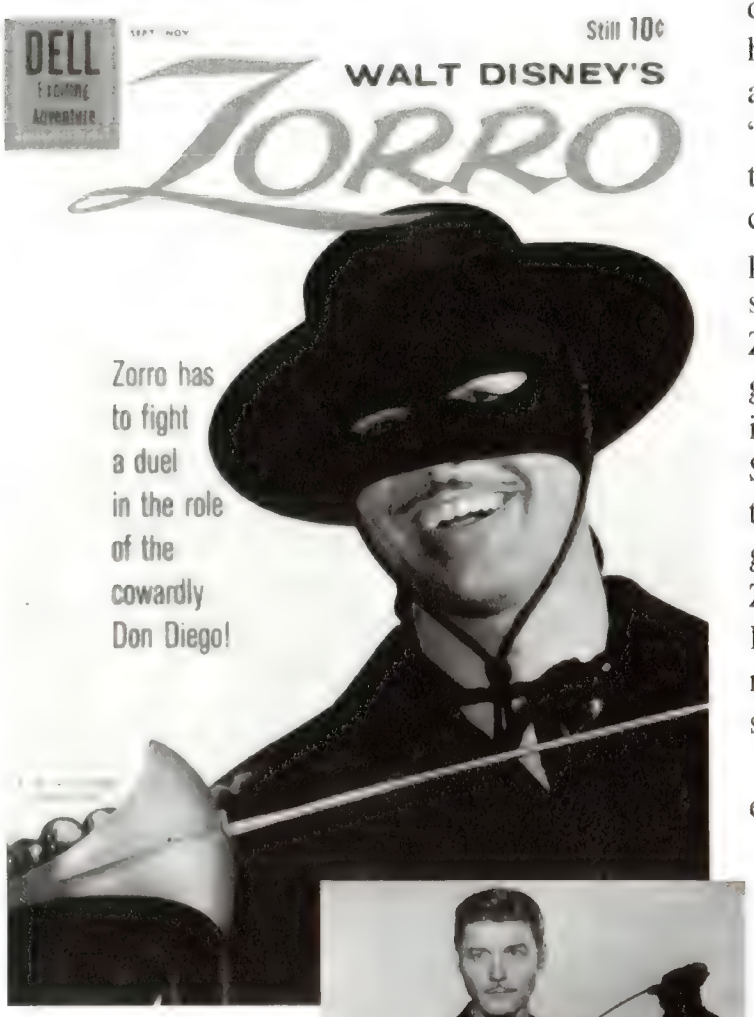
There were moments of wonderful animation in the series, thanks to Disney, such as in the episode "Man With a Whip" where Guy Williams held a candle out a window to signal his servant, Bernardo, with a flaming "Z" in the air, a trick accomplished by drawing the flames of the emerging and dissipating "Z" on each frame of film.

After 14 *Four Color* issues the title stood on its own, starting as #8 and ending with #15, 22 issues total. By the time *Walt Disney's Zorro* #15 (Nov 1961) appeared the series had been off ABC-TV for more than two years. On the cover, Williams looked less enthusiastic, standing very close to the set door and gazing into the distance. Only four more hour-long adventures aired as "Frontierland" segments on *Disneyland* in 1960 and 1961. The comic book connection had so played out that neither Dell nor Disney made any effort to produce movie comics to accompany *The Sign of Zorro* or *Zorro the Avenger*, Disney's 1961 theatrical cannibalizations of the television series. Williams had hopes of a continuing role on *Bonanza*, but other than a handful of guest appearances, that never materialized. Aside from a few forgettable motion picture leads, his role as John Robinson on *Lost in Space* was his best opportunity for the rest of the decade.

OUT OF THE TV NIGHT...THE TV ZORRO

No one should discount Guy Williams' performance as Zorro. It was a tough role to play, and he pulled it off well. The 6-foot-3 Peekskill Military Academy graduate had just the right good looks and athleticism to embody "the fox so cunning and free," and the right amount of charm as well. The toughest part was not portraying the dashing Zorro, but to spend most of the time as the un-heroic Don Diego de la Vega. He usually donned the costume for only the final five minutes each week, and then you'd have to wonder how everyone around him, including his loving but disapproving father, his girlfriend (when there was one), and the sergeant who became his occasional drinking buddy, could fail to recognize him just because he suited-up in black and put on a mask.

As for fencing, Williams had trained since age seven, and his matches, usually against fencing master Fred Cavens, were some of the best ever filmed. Guy Williams was born Armando Catalano of Italian immigrant parents. His winning smile launched his career in toothpaste commercials. The Williams Zorro was the laughing cavalier of *Four Color* #933 (Sep 1958) and *Walt Disney's Zorro* #11 (Sep 1960, reprinted by Gold Key as #6, Jun 1967), his smile as disarming as his sword. Having expatriated to Argentina in 1986, Williams was found dead in his Buenos Aires apartment of an apparent heart attack in May 1989.



Born Armand Joseph Catalano, Guy Madison on the photocover of **Walt Disney's Zorro** #11 (Nov 1960) and in a no-mask, Errol Flynnish still.

Collecting any of the photo cover comic books has only recently gained momentum. It has more to do with generations nurtured by television than for any reason intrinsic to comics themselves. A good example of this is *Four Color* #1037 (Dec 1959), one of the more valuable and desirable photo covers, not so much for Zorro as for Annette Funicello, although it is a beautiful dusk-blue cover. (Annette received her first guest appearance on "Zorro" as a sixteenth birthday present from "Uncle Walt.") Due to the neglect in this area of collecting it is very difficult to find mint or near-mint examples. Many times I have walked into a shop or convention and asked for Zorro only to see the dealer's eyes glaze and a quizzical detachment set in. "We deal in Marvels and DCs." Sometimes the response might be, "I think there's one in a box in the garage..." So where does one look for Zorro? At comic cons? at Western Hero cons? at Disneyana cons? at flea markets? The answer is like the elusive fox himself: everywhere at once.

Zorro covers are among the brightest and most exciting of all the photo covers, and his mask and cape gave him a connection to the Silver Age rebirth of the costumed hero which other photo covers lacked. Whether it's the original fifteen Dells, or the nine reshufflings by Gold Key, or the two Top Comics reprints, the Disney covers seem to be fitting emblems of a character who still lives after seventy-five years in so many different media, and an actor who still rides somewhere in the night across the American cultural landscape.

IMAGES © WALT DISNEY

The character of "the Fox" has exerted quite an influence. Bob Kane has stated several times that Zorro was the original inspiration for The Batman, the Batcave and the secret identity of wealthy but ineffectual socialite Bruce Wayne. Alex Toth returned to Zorro in recent years, reminiscing in the introduction to the second volume of the Eclipse collections, as well as drawing covers for both volumes. Toth also contributed to the Marvel Comics series as seen on the cover of *Zorro* #11 (Oct 1991).

This article originally appeared in Overstreet's Advanced Collector *#1 (Summer 1993). At that time, the author, David Ainsworth Cook, was an assistant professor of Art at Bridgewater College in Virginia.* *Article © David Ainsworth Cook with some material ©1993 Overstreet Publications. New material ©2002 Gemstone Publishing. All rights reserved.*

"Now consider this, ye that forget God,
lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."
Psalms 50 + 22

The Avenger of Blood

By Rob Hughes

"By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" and there are many sides of the Almighty. Many manifestations in which He has revealed Himself to mankind. To the chosen elect, He is the Everlasting Father - faithful protector of great compassion and everlasting mercy. For others, He is the mysterious and greatly feared Lord of Hosts known only from ancient tales of awe-inspiring miracles, magnificent deliverances and epic battles. But woe to the evil and them that work iniquity. To these He is a God of inescapable vengeance whose anger kindles hot as he pours out his blazing fury in the terrible visage men know as the Spectre.

T. Brunner '02

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THE
SPECTRE
JERRY SIEGEL and BERNARD BAILY
NO ONE KNOWS THAT JIM CORRIGAN, HARD-FISTED DETECTIVE, IS IN REALITY THE EARTHBOUND SPECTRE, WHOSE MISSION IS TO RID THIS WORLD OF CRIME.....

Famous Spectre splash panel (used in More Fun Comics *#57-#65) revealing the hero's secret identity and his divine purpose. This particular splash is from issue 60 (Oct 1940) and represents one of the most memorable of all Golden Age images. Artwork by Bernard Baily.*

The first of all supernatural super-heroes materialized into existence at the dawn of the Golden Age of comic books. Writer Jerry Siegel (who had previously, along with the artist Joe Shuster, created the greatest of all super-heroes: Superman, in *Action Comics* #1, Jun 1938) teamed up with a relatively unknown artist named Bernard Baily (who would also create the Hourman for *Adventure Comics* #48 in Mar, 1940) to bring forth the most awesome and ultra-powerful character this side of the Almighty Himself. Drawing from the various ghost stories appearing in the classic pulp title *Weird Tales*, Siegel brought to life a dark and forboding hero that was, in so many ways, just as original a concept as Superman. He certainly was more powerful. In fact, his powers seemed almost limitless. An eerie being who had been directly empowered by, and granted divine authority over life and death from the Lord. In a private and rarely granted interview, Siegel explained that he wrote the "mysterious, heavenly voice" (that first appeared in the two-part origin story) as God's own, personal voice; thus making the Spectre a very special creation. His sacred mission: To utterly destroy all forms of evil and corruption and wipe clean criminal activities from the face of the Earth. Judgment Day had arrived. A reckoning was due.

THE SPECTRE!
WHO IS HE??
WHAT IS HE??
READ THIS BRAND NEW FEATURE IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF MORE-FUN-COMICS!
SPECTRE WARNINGS!
"Who is He?
What is He?"
Soon we would know!
Two Spectre teaser ads which appeared in print one month before (left) and just prior (right), respectively, to the superhero's first appearance in More Fun Comics #52. From More Fun Comics #51 (Jan 1940) and Action Comics #21 (Feb 1940).
THE SPECTRE
WHO IS HE?
WHAT IS HE?
A STARTLING NEW AND REALLY-DIFFERENT-FEATURE WRITTEN BY JERRY SIEGEL AUTHOR OF 'SUPERMAN' AND DRAWN BY BERNARD BAILY!
THE 'SPECTRE' STARTS IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF MORE FUN COMICS - DON'T MISS HIM!!

More Fun Comics #52
(Feb 1940)

First appearance and origin (Part 1) of the Spectre, written by Jerry Siegel and drawn by Bernard Baily. With the publication of this issue, the Spectre became the first and greatest of all supernatural super-heroes. First Spectre cover by Baily.

The Genesis occurred in *More Fun Comics* #51 (Jan 1940). Readers took their very first glimpse of the Spectre in a small, one-panel teaser advertisement at the end of the Buccaneer story announcing, "The Spectre! Who is he?? What is he?" Who and what indeed. For here in this small panel appeared an odd looking character with a lime-green face, royal blue chest and adorned in a purple hood and cloak. A diamond in the rough. A few color alterations and the final polishing needed to be made before the power could be unleashed.

1940. The golden year of the Golden Age. The Spectre appeared full-blown and stoically intimidating as he confronted a group of frightened thugs on the cover of *More Fun Comics* #52 (Feb 1940). This landmark issue would mark the only time in which the Spectre utilized a blue hooded cloak and trunks. Forest green became his trademark color for the duration of his career hereafter. The splash panel of this debut issue introduced him (in costume) as "The 'Spectre,' a supernatural being whose mission on Earth is to stamp out crime and to enforce justice with the aid of such weird powers as becoming invisible, walking through walls and delivering death with a glance...." His origin is perhaps the most tragic and darkly ironic in all comic history.

The two-part Golden Age classic opens with the "hard boiled" tough-as-nails detective Jim Corrigan sharing a private moment with close friend Wayne Grant as he prepares to attend an engagement party with his wife-to-be Clarice Winston, "A beautiful and wealthy young socialite." One of Corrigan's informants, named "Stodie," tips him off to a fur heist that will go down that very night at the Westmore Warehouse. Corrigan arrives on the scene and single-handedly takes out a quad of thieves with a combination of right hooks and left uppercuts. Infuriated that this young and fearless detective has interfered and once again spoiled his plans, "Gat" Benson, a mobster gang leader, kidnaps Corrigan and Clarice and takes the couple to an abandoned warehouse on the waterfront. One of "Gat's" men cold-cocks Jim from behind and places him in a hollow barrel, fills it to the rim with water and cement, and heaves the wooden tomb into the cold river below. Jim Corrigan dies. "Up toward the streaming light ahead streaks Jim's figure at infinite speed...." At the gates of eternity Jim's spirit hovers before the Lord (represented in a large commanding voice) who speaks to the detective from a brightly lit cloud: "Listen Jim Corrigan and you will learn... Your mission on Earth is unfinished...You shall remain Earthbound battling crime on your world with supernatural powers, until all vestiges of it are gone!" Corrigan's protests go unanswered as his spiritual essence hurls back down across the cosmos to the bottom of the river. Shocked at the sight of a lifeless hand protruding out from a barrel of cement, Jim realizes he is looking at his own slain physical body. He vows vengeance on "Gat" Benson and quickly discovers his ability to fly, suspend in midair, turn invisible and perform any feat he wishes. Part one closes with Corrigan rushing to save his beloved Clarice from the clutches of Benson and his murderous gang.

More Fun Comics #53 (Mar 1940) begins with Corrigan gliding through the warehouse wall to confront his slayers. As one of the gangsters turns to shoot Clarice, Jim fixes his eyes upon the criminal and inaugurates his famous Death Stare which would become The Spectre's grim, unmistakable calling card in the years to follow. The gangster collapses to the floor dead. A second thug named Ricky advances to finish off Clarice (who has fainted) but Corrigan stands in the gap and wills the would-be killer to age at a furiously rapid rate until only a skeleton remains. Jim states, "You've robbed, you've killed and this is your reward. Die!"

Benson flees in utter terror but Corrigan heads off the gang leader. In desperation, "Gat" reels and fires at Clarice. The bullet finds its mark as Jim rushes forward to touch

More Fun Comics #53
(Mar 1940)

Second appearance and origin (Part 2) of the Spectre as the story continues from issue 52. Slain in the line of duty, Jim Corrigan dons the famed forest-green cloak (at the end of the story) for the first time, transforming himself into the most feared of all "Mystery Men": the Spectre. Cover art by Baily.

Fear not James Corrigan

I AM the Lord...The Almighty

I Have Chosen you and given you exceedingly great power
to war on the forces of darkness, and against every evil thing,
until all forms are wiped clean from the face of the Earth.
You shall be My Wrath. My Angel of Death.
This is your sacred mission.

I SHALL NOT BE SATISFIED UNTIL CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES UPON THIS EARTH ARE A THING OF THE PAST !!
IT LOOKS BAD FOR ORGANIZED CRIME! TO FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES OF THIS ASTOUNDING CHARACTER, BE SURE TO SECURE THE NEXT AND EVERY FORTH-COMING ISSUE OF :
MORE FUN COMICS!
SUPERMAN every month in ACTION COMICS!

After avenging his own murder and saving Clarice, the Spectre accepts his divine mission and vows to war on all criminal activities until they are completely eradicated. From More Fun Comics *#53.*

Benson, sending him into unconsciousness. Jim discovers he has gained even more amazing abilities for as soon as he touches his fiancée, "No wound! As soon as I touched it–it Healed Instantly." Realizing that he could never again lead any sort of normal life, Corrigan breaks off the engagement with Clarice and returns home in painful solitude.

Within the lone confines of his room, "Jim busies himself constructing a strange costume" stating, "I'll continue to be Jim Corrigan, detective–but when I battle crime as The Spectre, I'll cloak my identity in this costume!" And thus, as a lone, tortured figure gazes up into the twilight pondering his colossal mission, his skin transforms into a murky gray, the pupils of his eyes disappear, and with the donning of a kelly-green hooded cloak, gloves, trunks, and low-cut boots the Spectre vows, "I shall not be satisfied until criminal activities on this Earth are a thing of the past!! And since that day, a lonely man has walked the Earth...A man both more and less than mortal. For the day Jim Corrigan died...The Spectre was born!"

Soon after this phantom's arrival upon this mortal planet, a warning spread like wildfire throughout the underworld: "If the Spectre was after you, say your prayers because you were as good as dead." Doomed evil-doers began fleeing in every direction like frightened rats. During the next five years, they began to realize that their lives, yea, rather their immortal souls hung in a delicate balance with this terrifying ghost lurking about. In his informative book *Over 50 Years of American Comic Books*, Ron Goulart describes the Astral Avenger as "the most intimidating of all super-heroes. As much a figure of horror as a good guy.... A grim uniquely talented chap, the Spectre didn't just collar crooks–he enjoyed himself by destroying them." And exterminate these criminal roaches he did, since it was the only way of attaining the salvation of eternal rest his soul so earnestly longed for.

In Peter Sanderson's commentary, *The Dark Justice of...The Spectre*, Michael Fleisher, (who would eventually script the most prolific and controversial series ever published on the character) writes: "In general, I very much liked the kind of raw, rough-edged quality that a lot of comic book characters had in their earliest appearances. The Spectre was for me sort of a vengeful Old Testament God-like character, wreaking vengeance from beyond the grave.

"In the original Spectre series, Jim Corrigan is engaged to Clarice Winston and he gets killed by gangsters. But God allows him to walk the Earth as a Spectre, though Clarice doesn't know he's dead. Corrigan walks up to her and breaks their engagement. He's decided that he's separated from the realm of mortals and has to sever his links with them.

"[Corrigan] was now committed to a life in which all he expressed was his anger. His mission was to exterminate evil, but he didn't have a real life. He didn't have real loves and real friendships. He didn't have recreation and relaxation and the joy of real living. He only has that he was some sort of divinely appointed executioner."

More Fun Comics #54 (Apr 1940) displays the most outstanding and definitive Spectre cover. A dark and moody illustration by the talented Bernard Baily that ranks up with the all-time greatest Golden Age covers. The ultimately powerful and ominous Spectre looming over an entire world torn apart by war and violence. The Avenger of Blood has come down from Heaven and the sins of mankind were about to be weighed in the balances...and found wanting.

Detective Corrigan began his new existence by opposing a spiritualist named Rhani-Set who was deceiving and extort-

More Fun Comics #54 *(Apr 1940)*

The most spectacular of all the Spectre covers during the Golden Age by Baily. A favorite among comic collectors.

ing money from Clarice's mother. After exposing the swami as a fraud, Corrigan tells him: "why don't you try and earn an honest living?" Humiliated and enraged, Rhani-Set kidnaps Clarice and demands a ransom of $100,000 for her safe return. Realizing that this greedy dog will stop at nothing to achieve his goals, Corrigan transforms into his wrathful identity and confronts the evil swami. Rhani-Set fires his pistol and the deadly bullet speeds toward the helpless girl. At that very instant, time itself is halted as the Lord raises his servant up to stand before Him revealing, "Jim Corrigan...once again judgment is to be passed upon you! We have relented...your mission is too gigantic for one individual...you shall be permitted to pass on to eternal rest!" Corrigan pleads, "But I can't pass onto another world now, as much as I'd care to! Clarice is in danger. She needs my help!" The Lord answers, "The decision is yours! Eternal rest or eternally Earth-bound! What is your answer?" And thus, "For Clarice's sake, Jim dooms his soul to the bitter fate of forever haunting Earth!" by stating, "I choose to remain Earth-bound!" The Lord concludes, "So shall it be!" and sends the Spectre back to Earth to save his beloved from certain death. He does. Rhani-Set and one of his henchmen turn and shriek in horror as "The Spectre permits them to glimpse death in his eyes, and die of fright." A final caption summed it up: "Now doomed to haunt crime and the world forever, The Spectre begins his lone battle against the underworld in earnest."

The Spectre's gray complexion paled to a pasty white with the release of *More Fun Comics* #55 (May 1940). Even more amazing abilities would come forth as detective Corrigan reads the guilty thoughts of Simmons, the 1st National Bank bookkeeper who had been embezzling money from his employer. Corrigan transforms and commands Simmons to confess his crime or walk into the Valley of Death with his grim alter-ego. The bookkeeper quickly agrees and turns himself over to the authorities. This issue also introduced the Spectre's first supernatural nemesis: Zor–a spirit confined to Earth to spread evil. With the Lord's intervention,

The Spectre demands a full confession with the terrible threat of a walk through the Valley of Death. From More Fun Comics *#55.*

More Fun Comics *#58 (Aug 1940)*

Superb human sacrifice and pagan idol cover as the Spectre rushes to the rescue of a helpless, would-be victim. Art by Baily.

the Spectre captures Zor in his own "Paralysis-Ray," leaving the wicked spirit in stationary isolation for all eternity. Returning Clarice to her home, Corrigan would once again have to subdue his emotions and compassion for his lost love by saying, "As Jim Corrigan I loved you Clarice deeply! But now I am the Spectre! My work is to destroy evil and to that end I dedicate myself."

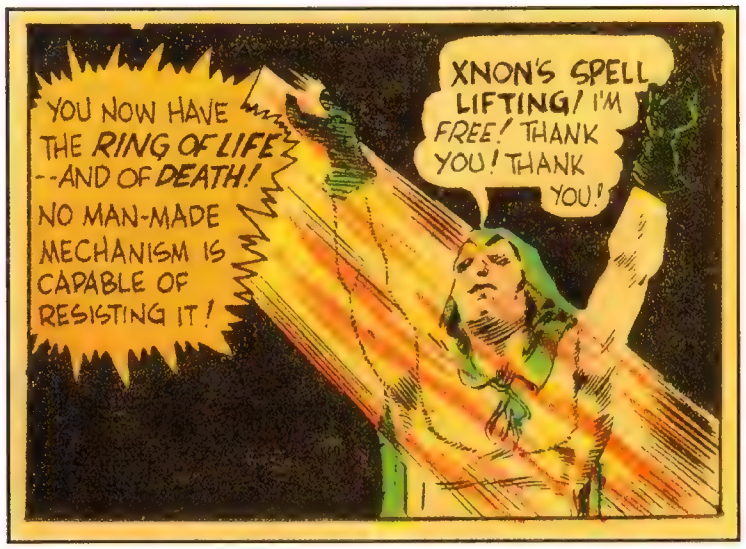
The most famous and recognizable depiction of the Spectre appeared for the first time in *More Fun Comics* #57 (Jul 1940). This gloomy and alluring splash panel (used until issue 65) would become a true Golden Age classic and prepared any unsuspecting or faint of heart readers for this solemn hero and the dark tale that followed.

The Grim Avenger continued to mete out hot fiery indignation and smite wrongdoers by the most horrifying means. A lasting impression was graphically etched into the minds of these wicked murderers. In *More Fun Comics* #58 (Aug 1940) an arsonist named Pete received this lesson in spades as he planned to burn a warehouse to cinders with the owner tied to a beam inside. With no more effort than a slight wave of the Spectre's hand, the flame freezes into a harmless icicle. In disbelief, Pete looks upon the face of death reflected in the ice and straight forward melts into a formless mound of goo, "consumed by the villainy within him." Another mobster, after being cornered at every turn, asks this relentless hunter "What manner of creature are you?" The Spectre replies, "I'm your sins, Morris, and I've finally caught up with you!" With desperate, escape-minded law-breakers speeding away, the dark wraith enlarges to immense stature in front of their onrushing automobile to easily reach down and hurl them into interstellar space. Crime and pollution eliminated with one

More Fun Comics *#57 (Jul 1940)*

Towering Spectre, looming over twilight, moonlit rooftops to engage two doomed thugs. Classic Spectre splash panel used for the first time in this issue with cover and story art by Baily.

The Spectre uses the dreaded "Death-Stare" as his huge eyes pierce into the black soul of a helpless thug. From More Fun Comics *#59.*


YOU NOW HAVE THE RING OF LIFE --AND OF DEATH! NO MAN-MADE MECHANISM IS CAPABLE OF RESISTING IT!
XNON'S SPELL LIFTING! I'M FREE! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Calling upon the Almighty for dire help, the Spectre is given the "Ring of Life and Death" to do battle with the tyrannical Xnon. More Fun Comics *#60.*

More Fun Comics #65 *(Mar 1941)*

Famous mirror cover as the Spectre confronts two terrified jewel thieves. Baily cover art.

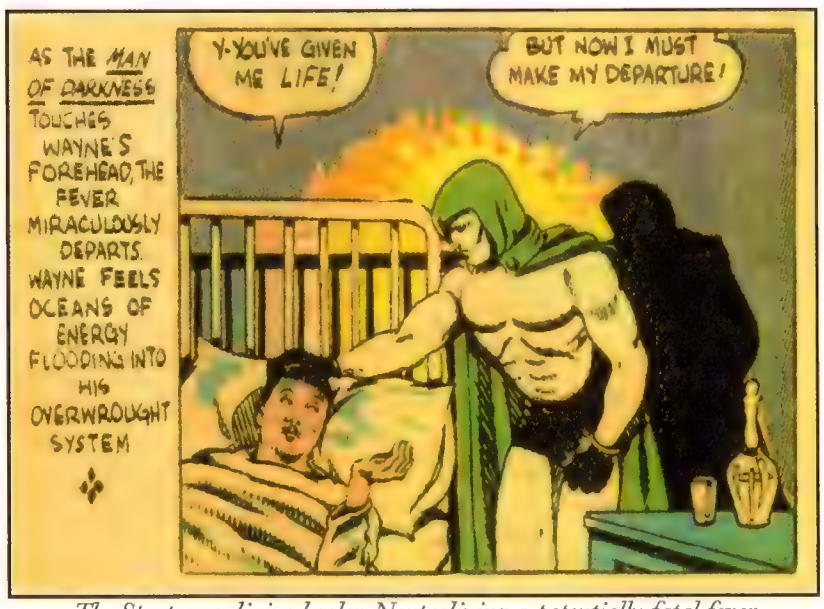
throw. Soon afterward, when offered a reward by Bob Brant (whom this guardian angel had saved from an untimely death on several occasions) the Spectre explains, "I seek no reward! My only desire is to see justice done! Good-Bye!"

Introducing himself in *More Fun Comics* #59 (Sep 1940) as "A ghost who has a strong dislike for thieves and murderers," to a small-time hood named Mulligan, the Spectre explains, "you represent the type of vermin I've sworn to stamp out of this world." Stamp right out of existence in fact. He trod down these fugitives like mire in the streets. This dreaded phantom came to devour and purify the very essence of evil. There was no hiding. No escape.

Issue 60 introduced the power-mad Xnon, a scheming kidnapper who wielded a power-rod that enslaved and almost forced the Spectre to perform a hideous crime of mass murder. The Almighty intercedes at the last crucial moment and grants his ambassador to Earth "The Ring of Life and of Death! No man-made mechanism is capable of resisting it!" After a full-hearted thanks to his Creator, the Spectre rushes through the cosmos to do battle once again with Xnon. Imprisoning the would-be conqueror at the center of a meteor, the victorious hero concludes, "and so ends Xnon and his mad ambitions."

The Spectre would soon adapt the uncanny ability to sense the presence of evil as if it were a tangible entity calling to him for punishment. The timely spook thwarts an assassination attempt on the President of the United States in *More Fun Comics* #62 (Dec 1940), "as the thug fires, the face of the Spectre appears between the Chief Executive and the bullet! The 'Man of Darkness' opens his mouth and swallows the bullet!"

As a keen weapon of God's wrath, the Spectre was continually called upon to oppose evil spirits and various other super-powered beings, banishing them from Earth forever. In *More Fun Comics* #63 (Jan 1941), he pursued a revenge-seeking soul named "Trigger," ultimately forcing him to recess into nothingness due to the bright and brilliant glow of "the Ring of Life." *More Fun Comics* #64 (Feb 1941) reveals a rare glimpse of the Spectre's compassionate side as he heals his close friend of a life-threatening fever. Wayne states, "You've given me life!" as the fever miraculously departs. The Ghostly Guardian's strange and unique ability to look back across the sands of time, to the very past itself, manifested in *More Fun Comics* #65 (Mar 1941). He used this power to


AS THE MAN OF DARKNESS TOUCHES WAYNE'S FOREHEAD, THE FEVER MIRACULOUSLY DEPARTS. WAYNE FEELS OCEANS OF ENERGY FLOODING INTO HIS OVERWROUGHT SYSTEM
Y-YOU'VE GIVEN ME LIFE!
BUT NOW I MUST MAKE MY DEPARTURE!

The Spectre as divine healer. Neutralizing a potentially fatal fever. From More Fun Comics *#64.*

SUDDENLY, THE THEATRE IS PLUNGED INTO COMPLETE DARKNESS — THEN, A TERRIFIC FLASH OF BLUE FLAME BLINDS EVERYONE.....
THE BLUE FLAME STRIKES!
WHAT A CLEVER ILLUSION — AND THAT VOICE!
EEEEE

The Blue Flame begins his short-lived career as a master jewel thief. From More Fun Comics *#65.*

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Comic Book Marketplace 2002 Survey

Please rate each major article and each regular column with a score of 1 through 5. 1=dislike the piece; 2="Ho Hum. Who cares?" 3=some enjoyment but it could have been a lot better; 4=you enjoyed it a lot; 5=it was a great article/column and you want to see more articles/columns like this.

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As the Web Spins	1	2	3	4	5
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#85					
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#87					
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Comic Book Marketplace 2002 Survey

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Thanks for helping make *CBM* a better magazine. We value your feedback.

Fill out this survey and send it in today!

More Fun Comics #66
(Apr 1941)

The Spectre battles the Black Doom in this issue. Second to last Spectre cover by Bailey.

More Fun Comics #67
(May 1941)

Classic and last Spectre cover for this title. The hero's dark and mysterious appeal was fast becoming a byword, and soon he would be a back-up feature. Cover art by Bailey.

bring a jewel thief calling himself "the Blue Flame" to justice (giving his alter-ego Jim Corrigan full credit for the capture). It would also be in this particular issue that the twilight super-hero would be referred to as "the Dark Knight," a recognizable title that was later attributed to one particular man-hunter which patrolled Gotham City by night.

More Fun Comics #66 (Apr 1941) brought forth a hateful villain with world domination as his agenda: the Black Doom. The tale opens with gargantuan werewolf-like monsters rampaging through the streets of Cliffland. Havoc, destruction and utter chaos follow in their wake. As the Spectre soars to intercept these wild marauding beasts, a weird drum beat seems to summon them to return from whence they came. Discovering another dimension exists inside a prehistoric painting hanging in the downtown museum, the Spectre dives into the picture and beholds a strange leader of dark intent; "What a man! A face as evil as Satan. Fiery eyes as foreboding as a flaming pit. A conglomeration of all the qualities that make up a repulsive, unclean thing; the Black Doom!" This demonic dictator strikes out at our hero, encircling him in a black cloud of dense vapor. Nevertheless, this avenging ghost is completely relentless and undaunted in his quest to crush and stamp out evil and, "with astounding swiftness, the forces of darkness shrink to reveal the Spectre surrounded by a protective glow of pure light." The God-like hero from Heaven speaks to his adversary, "You forget that good is more powerful than evil." Reducing the army of maddened monsters to harmless oily fluid, the Spectre leaps out from the ancient painting and straightway destroys the art work in a burst of flame summing, "Thus perishes the gate to reality! And thus also ends the menace to mankind."

More Fun Comics #67 (May 1941) marked the very last time the Spectre would adorn the cover of this title. By issue101 he was gone altogether. The dreadful spirit of wrath who had once invoked trembling terror in any law-breaker unfortunate enough to cross his path, had lost his unique appeal. He had, like several other Golden Age super-heroes, fallen away from his dark roots, mysterious inception and gloomy surroundings to be thrust into the spotlight of recognition and familiarity. The enigmatic primal power vanished. This killed The Grim Avenger and bound him to a death from which he would not be resurrected in his full glory for nearly 30 years.

Acknowledgements:

Jack K. Der: *For his fantastic graphic design, professionalism and yet another huge "favor."*

Dr. John Townsend: *For taking the time to make all of those color Xeroxes, providing me with the interior story information.*

Ralph D. Hughes: *For his stunning artwork. His interpretation of the Spectre is my most favorite.*

Frank Brunner: *Superb splash painting, capturing the grim mood and true direction of the article.*

Jerry Siegel *and* ***Bernard Baily:*** *Two Golden Age legends who created one of the most popular and enduring super-heroes of all time. May the Lord rest you both.*

And to the collectors, dealers and individuals who helped me in acquiring and presenting this material:

Steve Geppi, Daniel Greenhalgh, Bill Hughes, Sharon Hughes, Monika Hughes, Maggie Hughes, Matt "Stinklin" Nelson, Bill Ponsetti, Stephen Fishler, Jason LaMarr and Harley Yee.

God Bless you all.

GOLDEN

CBM's Jeff Vaughn interviews writer Steven T. Seagle

Alan Scott returns to action as the original Green Lantern in **Green Lantern: Brightest Day/Blackest Night**, the new one-shot from writer Steven T. Seagle and artist John K. Snyder III. Set in the 1940s, this story is what Seagle calls a "re-imagining" of the first encounter between GL and the murderous man-monster known as Solomon Grundy.

How did this project get started?

John K. Snyder was interested in doing something a little shorter than his *Doctor Mid-Nite* run, but still in the DC Comics Universe. He had mentioned something along the lines of my series *Sandman Mystery Theatre* and we decided to give that treatment to Golden Age Green Lantern minus the bad words and graphic situations!

What attracts you about the Golden Age Green Lantern?

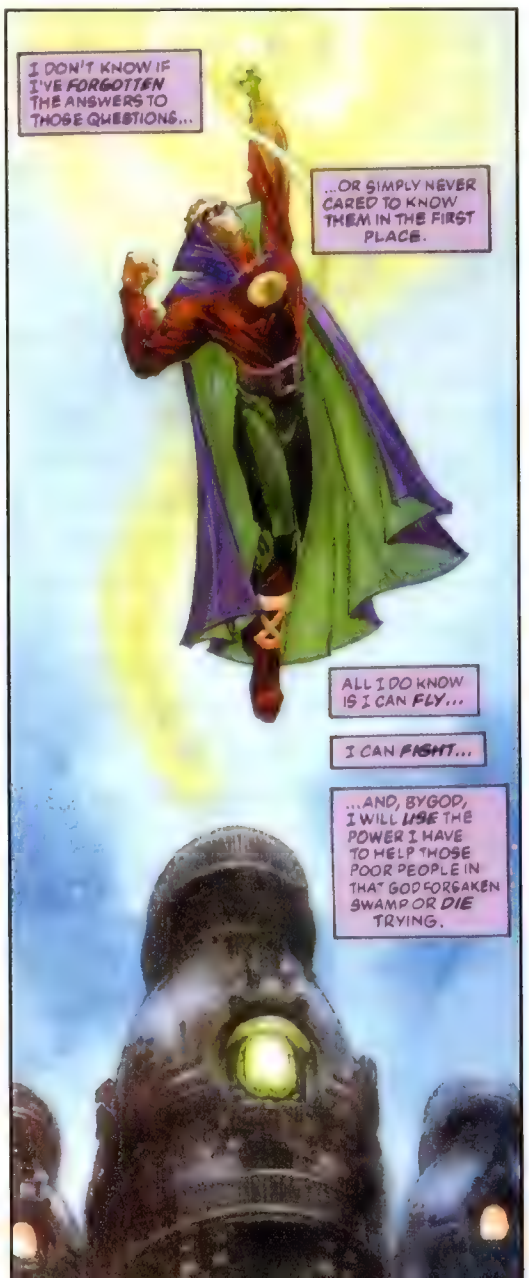
I actually wasn't attracted to him to any great degree initially, something about that costume...but after I read some more of his earlier stories, I liked something in his personality. I felt that Alan Scott was someone who wanted to be more than he was and yet when he took on the Green Lantern role, felt like he was more than any man ought to be.

Were you highly familiar with the Golden Age stories or did you rely more on the modern interpretations of the character when you started writing?

The story re-imagines a Golden Age story—the first meeting between Solomon Grundy and GL—so I relied entirely on Golden Age reference to set my tone.

In this story, GL has some of his forgotten Golden Age powers such as the ability to pass through things. How did you decide to do that?

I wanted the story to be consistent with the original. I think we're in a time where a character can have powers in the past he doesn't have in the future without people protesting one way or the other about it. At least I hope we are! Aren't we....?


I DON'T KNOW IF I'VE FORGOTTEN THE ANSWERS TO THOSE QUESTIONS...
...OR SIMPLY NEVER CARED TO KNOW THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE.
ALL I DO KNOW IS I CAN FLY...
I CAN FIGHT...
...AND, BYGOD, I WILL USE THE POWER I HAVE TO HELP THOSE POOR PEOPLE IN THAT GODFORSAKEN SWAMP OR DIE TRYING.

AGE... NOW

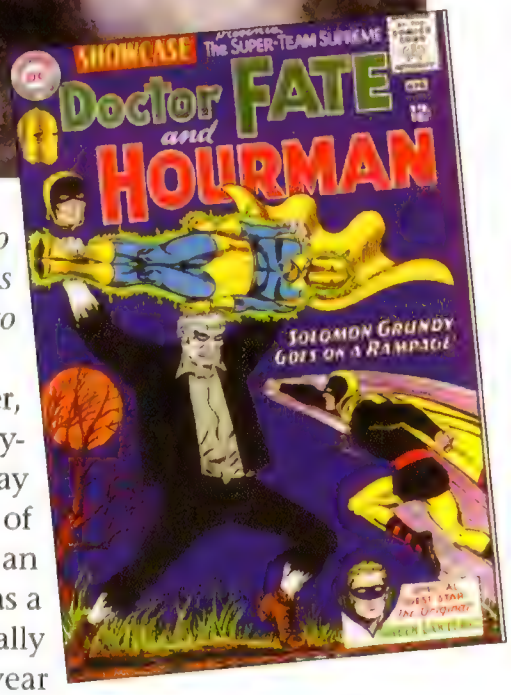
Your light not hurt me with TREE.
THINK WHAT YOU WANT--
--BUT NOW THAT WE'RE AWAY FROM INNOCENT PASSENGERS, I WILL PUT A STOP TO YOU.
THEY the bad ones! NAZI men!
In MY swamp! MY place!

Was the retro style of some of the pages something you scripted or something John brought to the book?

The design sense is fully John's. He has a deco feel to some of his layouts, which really adds to the feel of the Golden Age quality of the story. Todd Klein also did a beautiful job lettering it to mimic that time as well.

When you write, does it matter to you what kind of atmosphere you work in? If so, what's optimum for you?

I always work with the TV on, but not anything I'd want to watch. I can't have anything scripted—movies, sitcoms, dramas, etc.—because I get too into the structure of the story and trying to unravel the plot points. Music also distracts me because I get into the structure of it and the composition of the lyrics if it has any. I have to have on crap [like] talk shows, home shows or news. It drowns out the outside world noises, which I always want to investigate, without being interesting enough to distract me.



What influenced you to become a writer? Were comics your first choice of what to write?

My fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Maxwell, read to us every-day at lunch, a chapter a day of some book. At the end of the year she was reading an adventure story to us. It was a very creepy kids book. Really troubling. The school year ended and I never got to find out how the story ended. That's when I started writing.

What influences your writing now?

I've never really had comics as influence. I mean, I love the writing of Alan Moore and Frank Miller and a lot of

the European school, like Giardino, but my influences are much more experimental stuff—1920s and 30s playwrights, 1960s poets, and 1980s short story writers, and all kinds of fringe/performance artists. I see stuff that has nothing to do with comics and think, "I'd like to see a comic like that." I wrote a one-shot entirely based on a drum corps show I'd seen once.

Do you have a regular writing routine? If so, what's involved?

I get up and start writing immediately. 8:30 am. I do four pages of comics. That usually takes till noon. I eat lunch, then I work on screenplays until about 4. I used to work mostly at night, but I've migrated to this schedule lately.

You've worked with some really talented artists. Any you'd care to talk about?

Well, anyone I've worked with for long periods is a person I hold in high regard both artistically and personally. I've been very lucky to have been partnered with guys like Teddy Kristiansen, Guy Davis, Duncan Rouleau, Chris Bachalo, and most recently, Kelley Jones, who I really get along with and respect.

What does John bring to this project?

This is John's project! He brought everything to it. It was his idea to do it. All I brought was the form and some dialogue. He's the one who killed himself for several years gutting it out to make these incredible paintings!

Like a lot of painted books, it took a long time for this to see the light of day. Was it worth the wait?

It's really nice looking. And John thinks it's a good read too, so it looks like it!

When you wrote the piece, the Nazi hijackers probably seemed like high adventure and an excellent plot device. Now they're a lot closer to reality. Did that give you any mixed feelings?

It really did. I wrote the plot almost four years ago. But I did the dialogue recently. The scenes of the plane crash and the whole terrorist angle really worked on me in a much different way post 9-11, and I think the dialogue and the tone of the book reflect that.

What else are you working on?

I just finished *"it's a bird..."* a 128-page Superman hardcover painted by Teddy Kristiansen and edited by Karen Berger, I'm writing *The Crusades* for Vertigo with Kelley Jones, I've got *Judas*, a one shot for Homage painted by Troy Hubbs, I'm going to take over the monthly *Superman* book with Scott McDaniel drawing, I just finished a screenplay and I have two others about half done. And I just started a weekly column at my website www.ManOfAction.tv.

What's your dream project?

Everything I work on. I try not to do something unless I really want to do it. The *"it's a bird...."* book was really tough, and breaks a lot of new ground and looks fantastic. It's not out yet, but when it is, it may just be my favorite thing of mine.

AND LIGHT...
"NO EVIL"...
"NO EVIL SHALL ESCAPE MY SIGHT."
THAT'S THE PLEDGE I MADE. THE GOAL I SET.
A HIGH BAR TO LEAP.
BUT WHY NOT? AFTER ALL, I AM ALAN SCOTT...
...THE GREEN LANTERN.
I'VE GOT A RING OF POWER...
A LANTERN TO CHARGE IT...
THE ABILITY TO RACE A TRAIN AS ADVANCED AS THE 20th CENTURY LIMITED TO GOTHAM...

SPECTRAL IMAGE

The task of rehabilitating the beloved Silver age Green Lantern has fallen to writer J.M. DeMatteis

...by Arnold T. Blumberg

He remains one of the quintessential icons of the science-driven Silver Age at DC—a brave test pilot with miraculous powers from a mysterious ring bestowed upon him by a dying alien. In a short time, he defined himself as one of the most tireless defenders of Earth alongside comrades like Superman, Batman, the Flash and Green Arrow. He was Hal Jordan, the Green Lantern, but his heroic career would one day face a tragic end.

His Justice League buddy, the Flash, had already perished in the Crisis on Infinite Earths in 1985-86, but unlike the Scarlet Speedster, Jordan would descend into madness and become a reality-altering villain before breathing his last. No matter what fans may think of the questionable wisdom of taking a beloved hero and twisting him into a nightmarish shadow of his former self, that's just what DC did when Hal Jordan became Parallax. And then he was gone, and all his superhero friends and readers could do was mourn.

But in comic books, anything is possible, and because of Hal Jordan's important role in the fabric of the DC Universe, it was decided to bring him back without contradicting the landmark death storyline. Seeking a way to justify Jordan's return, DC hit upon the strategy of allowing the spirit of Hal Jordan to take on the mantle of another classic DC character, the 'Spirit of Wrath' known as the Spectre. With a once squeaky-clean fellow like Jordan, however, there would be a change or two in the basic modus operandi of the Spectre to accommodate the former Green Lantern, and that's where *Spectre* scribe J.M DeMatteis came in.

"Like many people out there, I wasn't particularly thrilled with what they did to the character," says DeMatteis. "I grew up at a time when the Hal Jordan Green Lantern was the ultimate—and I say this positively—white-bread hero."

DeMatteis, like many GL fans, could barely contain his rage and confusion when the Parallax story began, but a call from Dan Raspler at DC convinced him to take on the enormous challenge of bringing Jordan back in the guise of the Spectre.

"My first response was 'That's so weird!'" says DeMatteis. "The sense that I got was you have this character

who is really a mainstay of the DC universe, and they did want to do something with him, not leave him dead and gone. They had already done that with the Flash, [and] I still haven't gotten over that one yet [laughs]. Although the Spectre is not as well-known or as absorbed into the collective comic book consciousness, the idea of bringing the two of them together was a way of bringing Hal Jordan back into the DC universe because they know he's an important part of their history."

Unfortunately, DeMatteis didn't much care for the notion of grafting Hal onto the Spectre—that is, until Raspler explained exactly what they wanted to do with the new series.

"Writing a character who's the Spirit of Wrath does not really appeal to me—[he's] a guy that goes around punishing people and turning into a big cheese grater and grating people up. Not my idea of a good time, but Dan was talking about Hal evolving over time into the Spirit of Redemption. Those are the kinds of stories that I love."

DeMatteis was excited by the prospect of writing Jordan as a metaphysical figure in search of redemption, and also played with the parallels between Hal's old role and his new one.

"The difference here is that with the Spectre, all of the other Spectres are aspects of his own consciousness," says DeMatteis. "We did this 'Spectre in space' storyline where he's encountering all these alien Spectres, and we do a little parallel with the GL Corps just for sheer nostalgic fun."

The notion that other Spectres are aspects of Jordan's collective personality in his new identity is a daunting one, and would no doubt be difficult to fathom for the erstwhile JLAer as well.

"He would probably go mad to realize the extent of his power and what he's capable of," says DeMatteis. "Little by little he's beginning to grasp that."

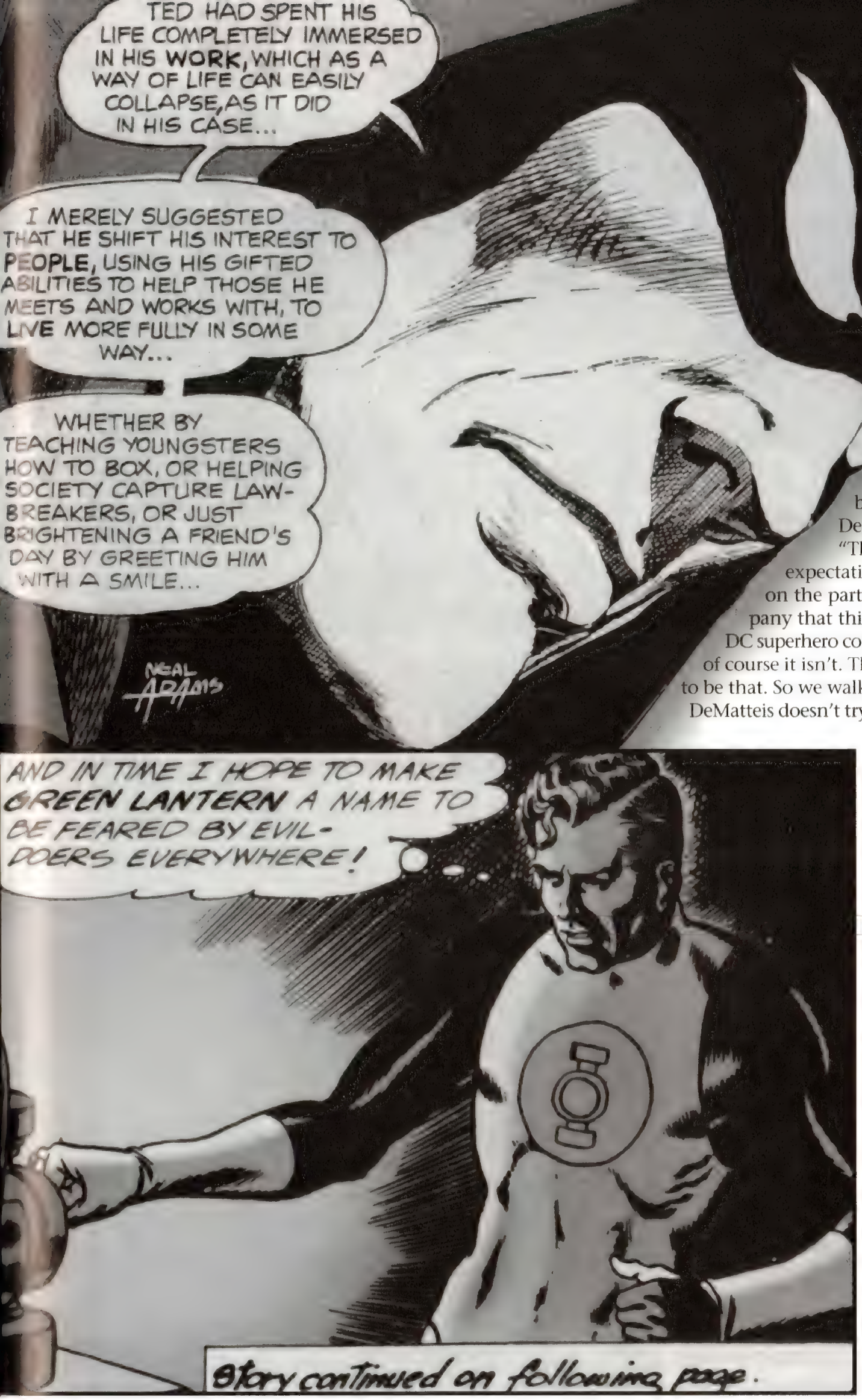
One of the more intriguing elements of this merged character is that the original Spectre and the Hal Jordan Green Lantern came from opposite ends of the spectrum. The Spectre was a metaphysical being while ol' GL had his origin firmly planted in the realm of science...or did he?

"You have a character who meets an alien and is given this ring, which is basically magic," says DeMatteis, "but within sci-fi trappings. It's a big difference when you start off with a character who is essentially a ghost, so immediately we're not starting with any kind of science fiction point of view. We're starting from a spiritual point of view. The Spectre by his very nature is a spiritual character. You're not going to do sci-fi stories, and even this 'Spectre in space' story set out to do that and the whole metaphysical angle took over by the time we were done. It's hard to do science fiction in this context."

What DeMatteis doesn't find hard to do, however, are more intimate stand-alone stories that explore character and emotion rather than huge space battles and superhero exploits.

"One of the things that I've enjoyed is doing one issue stories," says DeMatteis. "With the Spectre it's great, because you can jump in anywhere. You can do a lot of interesting things with him. In a lot of ways, it can be an anthology book starring the Spectre."

DeMatteis may relish the opportunity to tell human-interest stories via the Spectre, but don't


TED HAD SPENT HIS LIFE COMPLETELY IMMERSED IN HIS WORK, WHICH AS A WAY OF LIFE CAN EASILY COLLAPSE, AS IT DID IN HIS CASE...
I MERELY SUGGESTED THAT HE SHIFT HIS INTEREST TO PEOPLE, USING HIS GIFTED ABILITIES TO HELP THOSE HE MEETS AND WORKS WITH, TO LIVE MORE FULLY IN SOME WAY...
WHETHER BY TEACHING YOUNGSTERS HOW TO BOX, OR HELPING SOCIETY CAPTURE LAW-BREAKERS, OR JUST BRIGHTENING A FRIEND'S DAY BY GREETING HIM WITH A SMILE...
NEAL ADAMS
AND IN TIME I HOPE TO MAKE GREEN LANTERN A NAME TO BE FEARED BY EVIL-DOERS EVERYWHERE!
Story continued on following page.

a lot of people want to see Hal doing his GL thing again? It's trying to strike that balance that's at the core of DeMatteis' efforts on this book. "The problem is there's still an expectation, and probably rightly so, on the part of some fans and the company that this is somehow a mainstream DC superhero comic," says DeMatteis, "which of course it isn't. There's no way it's ever going to be that. So we walk a fine line."

DeMatteis doesn't try to make the Spectre a more prominent do-gooder in the DC pantheon either, even though countless fans—and his employers—may want that more than anything else.

"Maybe that's [DC's] thought, but when I sit down to write it I don't think about anything like that," says DeMatteis. "I'm just thinking 'Gee, what's a good story,' and I can't think about 'By doing this, I'm going to bring Hal Jordan back into the forefront!' I can only think about what I will do this month. What's good and what can we say that has some resonance or intelligence or heart?"

"The real balance with the character," adds DeMatteis, "and I admit that sometimes it's difficult, is keeping anchored in this guy Hal Jordan on the one hand and this huge cosmic entity called the Spectre

thing about comic book characters that get really big—it's the eight-year-old in me—he's as big as six planets! Once an issue, I still have him get really big, because I just think it's the coolest thing."

While some Silver Age GL fans delight in having Hal Jordan back at all, DeMatteis isn't content to let it end there. In fact, Hal will gain a new arch-foe who might be just a tad familiar.

"In the current storyline we're going to see Sinestro," says DeMatteis. "Sinestro will [evolve] into a new version that will function in the Spectre's life the way the former Sinestro functioned in GL's life."

DeMatteis knows, however, that even that won't please some old GL fans.

"There are people who are reading this book because they're into Hal Jordan and they want Green Lantern," says DeMatteis. "They don't want the Spectre, so nothing really pleases them, and then there are the Spectre fans that want the supernatural stuff."

Hopefully, both cadres of fans will be happy with a Prestige Format two-part miniseries that will reunite the Hal Jordan Spectre with his friends in the Justice League.

"On the one level, it's this big cosmic story with the Justice League and the Spectre," says DeMatteis, "but a lot of it revolves around how these people react to him, especially focusing on the Batman/Hal Jordan relationship. Batman, of all of them, really does not trust this guy at all, although by the end of the story they connect. It's a fun, big cosmic story that probably won't be out until next year.

that he's become. In many religious and metaphysical viewpoints, when you die, you let go of whatever individual identity you had in life. You don't stay Hal Jordan for eternity. So he's both this grander cosmic thing and he's Hal Jordan. But if you lose Hal—if you lose that journey of redemption and what he's going through—there's nothing to relate to. The real challenge is keeping the balance, expanding the borders of who he is and yet not losing that core of humanity."

DeMatteis focuses his writing energy on examining the redemptive path of Hal Jordan in his role as the Spectre, eschewing much of the Golden Age Spectre aspects that initially turned him off to the project. In fact, he doesn't know much about the Golden Age Spectre at all.

"I read bits and pieces of the [John] Ostrander [-scripted] Spectre, pretty incredible stuff," says DeMatteis. "But in terms of the Golden Age Spectre, maybe I've seen a story or two reprinted, but I don't have any profound familiarity with the character, I vaguely remember the cheese-grater Spectre, always turning into weird things and killing people in unique and horrible ways. I always thought the character was cool because there was some-

Obviously, nostalgia continues to inform DeMatteis' approach to the character in many ways, but given the sheer power of the forces that root this new Spectre in his past as the Silver Age Green Lantern, is it ever likely that Hal Jordan will vanish completely?

"I envision not so much a shedding of Hal but an expanding of Hal," says DeMatteis. "We're always going to need something to relate to, so I don't know if I'd even know how to write a Spectre [without Hal]—then it becomes like those big cosmic Marvel characters that are embodiments of ideas as opposed to characters. You wouldn't want to do a monthly Eternity book, so there always has to be a human character to anchor it, and right now that character is Hal."

But if Hal is to move on to his ultimate reward, DeMatteis can see a way to continue. After all, the Spectre has been someone else before.

"I can envision someone else coming along to be the Spectre while Hal Jordan moves off to final peace," says DeMatteis. "I have a very specific idea of who else could be the Spectre."

For now, DeMatteis is content to stick with Hal through thick and thin, much as he and other fans did through all those classic adventures back in the Silver Age and beyond. At least, he will for now.

"I can't say I'm on this book for another five years," says DeMatteis. "It might be five years, it might be five minutes, and it all depends on how I feel and how my enthusiasm is at the moment. Right now I know I'm on it for the next three issues or so [laughs].

Our old friend Don Maris sent us this copy of a brochure advertising wire racks made to hold comic books. I love seeing good sharp photos of newsstands, where you can clearly see what comics were on the rack. If any of our **CBM** readers have pictures of old newsstand displays, we'd like to see a copy! It makes you want to travel back in time and buy all these comics for a dime apiece! —RC

For Comics

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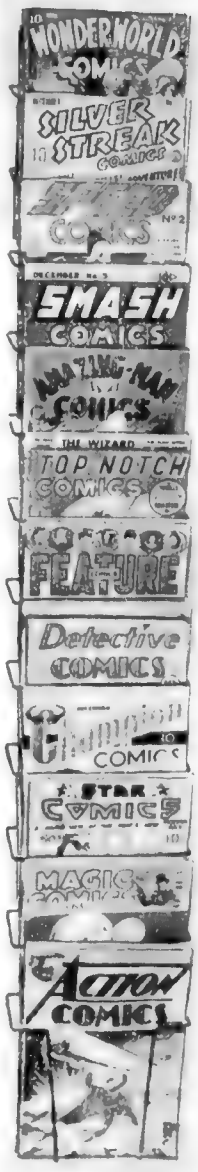

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Writer Alex Simmons talks about **Batman: Orpheus Rising, Tarzan,** and... oh, yeah, **Blackjack!**

HIT ME!

CBM Interview by Bill Baker

*Actor-producer-playwright-teacher-comic book creator Alex Simmons has been active in the performing and visual arts since his teenage years. As noted in our recent interview with Don McGregor (*CBM *#88), his comic connections go all the way back to the '60s when he was the first artist to draw* Detectives, Inc. *His comic book creations,* Blackjack *and* Race Against Time, *have been published through Simmons' own Dark Angel Productions. He recently completed a five-issue series,* Batman: Orpheus Rising, *introducing a major new character of his creation into the Dark Knight's mythos. In addition to seeing* Blackjack *optioned by Hollywood, he's also now scripting the comic strip adventures of Tarzan.*

Comic Book Marketplace: How would you describe the *Batman: Orpheus Rising* project?

Alex Simmons: *Batman: Orpheus Rising* was a five-part miniseries about a new costumed character who shows up in Gotham City. It's one of the worst possible times for someone unknown, and whose motives are unknown, to make a debut. And Batman encounters this character as he's trying to deal with all hell breaking loose in Gotham—there's someone shooting down police officers, there's community and police tension building up like crazy because of these shootings and the cops pursuing clues, and leads, and suspects. There's also a war brewing between a particular gang-banger crew, known as the Deacons, and the new head of a Russian mob that's becoming pretty powerful in Gotham. It's all percolating at the same time, and here's this new figure stalking the night, and it's unclear if he's behind all this stuff. So Batman has to cautiously move through all these other things, and when he finally encounters Orpheus, there's a point where he has to try and determine, "What are you here for? What are you about, and do I have to take you down with everybody else?"

The thing that makes the assignment intriguing for me is that I was asked to create this new character, and I was asked to specifically create an African-American hero, and to create him for the Batman universe. It was made quite clear to me by the editors that brought me in, both Denny O'Neil and Joe Illidge, that this is something that DC felt they needed. That they did not have this kind of representation within the Bat family, and they wanted it to be a character that would have longevity; in other words, not just pop up for this one story, and then be forgotten. So I had to really come

up with something that I felt would be solid, and that DC would feel would be worth the exploration.

The offer stunned me, because I thought they were going to offer the possibility of a filler story, or something along those lines. I had not anticipated this. Of course I wanted to take on the assignment, but I'm the kind of writer who does not like to hack out a thing. If I don't have anything to say, if I don't have a real story to tell, then it's better if I don't do it. No matter what the prestige, or the money, might be, if I can't do a decent job, then I tend to back away from it.

So I asked for a couple of weeks to see if I really had something that I thought would work for them, and they graciously gave it to me. Two weeks later, I came back to them with a verbal pitch, which they went for, and then it took me a few weeks to write it out in proper form. Denny read it, and I was waiting for critiques, and tweaks, and whatever else he might want. So I'm waiting for his...notes and I didn't hear from him a couple of weeks. Nothing. Then I finally got in touch with him [and asked about it], and he said, "Oh, I've already sent it on to Bob Schreck and Matt Idelson and all those guys." And the next thing I knew, it was several months [later], and I was being told, "Go for it!"

Unfortunately, [by that time] Denny had retired, and he was easing himself out of the process, and Joe Illidge was no longer with DC by this point, and I was assigned to a new editor, Michael Wright, who turns out to be—thank goodness—a great guy. He and Denny and I went out to lunch, again, just before I started the script, to make sure we were all on the same page and to give me his reaction to the presentation. After that, they pretty much gave me room to go do what I wanted to do. And I hope that what I've done is something that the reading/buying public will enjoy immensely, because DC seems to be very happy with it. The editors have all been very supportive. By the way, you're going to see an Orpheus profile page in the December issue of a new Secret Files *DCU*, so I know that DC is very serious about wanting this character in the family, and to start really making appearances throughout the various series. So, keep your fingers crossed.

If you want to know about Orpheus [as a character], I can say that one of the risks that I'm taking with him is the motivation for what he's doing. If you read DC's [online message] boards, a lot of people are sort of used to their costumed heroes being in it for revenge. Even with my Blackjack character, there's a certain point where a very close loved one has died, and there's a certain anger component. That's not really where Orpheus is coming from. He's also not, as a number of African-American characters have been in comic books, he's not a teacher, he's not an ex-convict, and he's not a social worker. He is very much from a profession that we all know—and I don't mean prostitution or something like that [General laughter]. He's very much from a profession that we know of, that we're exposed to, but, again, the DCU doesn't have anybody like that in there. He'll finally express some of his motivation for doing what he's doing in a dialogue he has with Batman. He stated that when you see the Justice League, or some of the other costumed heroes out there, people of color may see aliens and heroes fighting for their lives, fighting for the planet and so forth, but many of them don't see themselves represented in those numbers. And, consequently, it's easier for some people of color to feel they have no power; they have no responsibility, no way of affecting their future, no way of making their lives better. They are constantly not seeing themselves in the mix of human beings that make the world work, so they quit. Orpheus says that he's part of an organization that will attempt to change that.

Batman says, "What, you're representing all black men?" and Orpheus replies, "No. But I'm going to do my part." So the story is a bit about role models and heroes, and it's about the things I grew up not being able to see. Although I grew up seeing heroes—I mean, I grew up watching television, and watching films and seeing a lot of heroic characters [there], and reading comics and seeing a lot of heroic characters [in them]. But in the vast majority of my childhood, and if you go back in films even prior to that, blacks, Latinos, and Asians were not normally portrayed as heroic figures. They were, maybe, sidekicks, [but were] usually

buffoons or incidental characters in some way, shape or form; victims, even, but not heroes.

I wanted to affect that in a number of ways. One is my *Blackjack* project, and this is a different way. I mean it felt good to have a character come right out and say [that] people of color, and all people, need to see different nationalities, and people of different hue and genders, representing the hero. Being there, and showing that we all affect the world we live in. We all can take responsibility for that. We all can make a difference if we make the effort. And that's where [Orpheus] is coming from, as opposed to "His parents were shot down, or he's the product of an experiment gone wrong."

CBM: Well, I know that you've also got a few other projects going on. In addition to your work on the *Tarzan* comic strip, you have a teaching gig going on twice a week.

Simmons: Yes, for United Media I'm writing the syndicated *Tarzan* Sunday strip, and I've been doing that since June of this year. A VP there [by the name of Amy Lago] brought me on to that project at United Media. And just before I segue out of that, I will say that two things happened there. One, they brought in a wonderful new artist named Eric Battle. So the two of us are working on the strip now and, if you can't get it in your Sunday paper—if you've asked for it, and they don't carry it, or whatever, you can go on the net to www.comics.com and that's the United Media/United Features website. And they have a portion in the banner [at the top of the page] where you can select what comic strips you want to look at, and you just click on that and scroll down to Tarzan and go to that [page. Once there, just] hit the calendar they have there, an electronic hyperlink calendar. If you just click on the Sundays, you'll see some beautiful work by Eric, and, I hope you'll think, some great writing by myself. Or at least some good writing. And we're just having a blast with it, and I think it's a very fun, exciting strip and storyline.

Second, United Media and the Edgar Rice Burroughs estate have signed an agreement with me, which is wonderful; they're giving me permission to do a Tarzan/Blackjack crossover in the strip. So starting, I think, mid-January 2002, we kicked off a 20-week Tarzan/Blackjack story. I'm really excited about the deal.

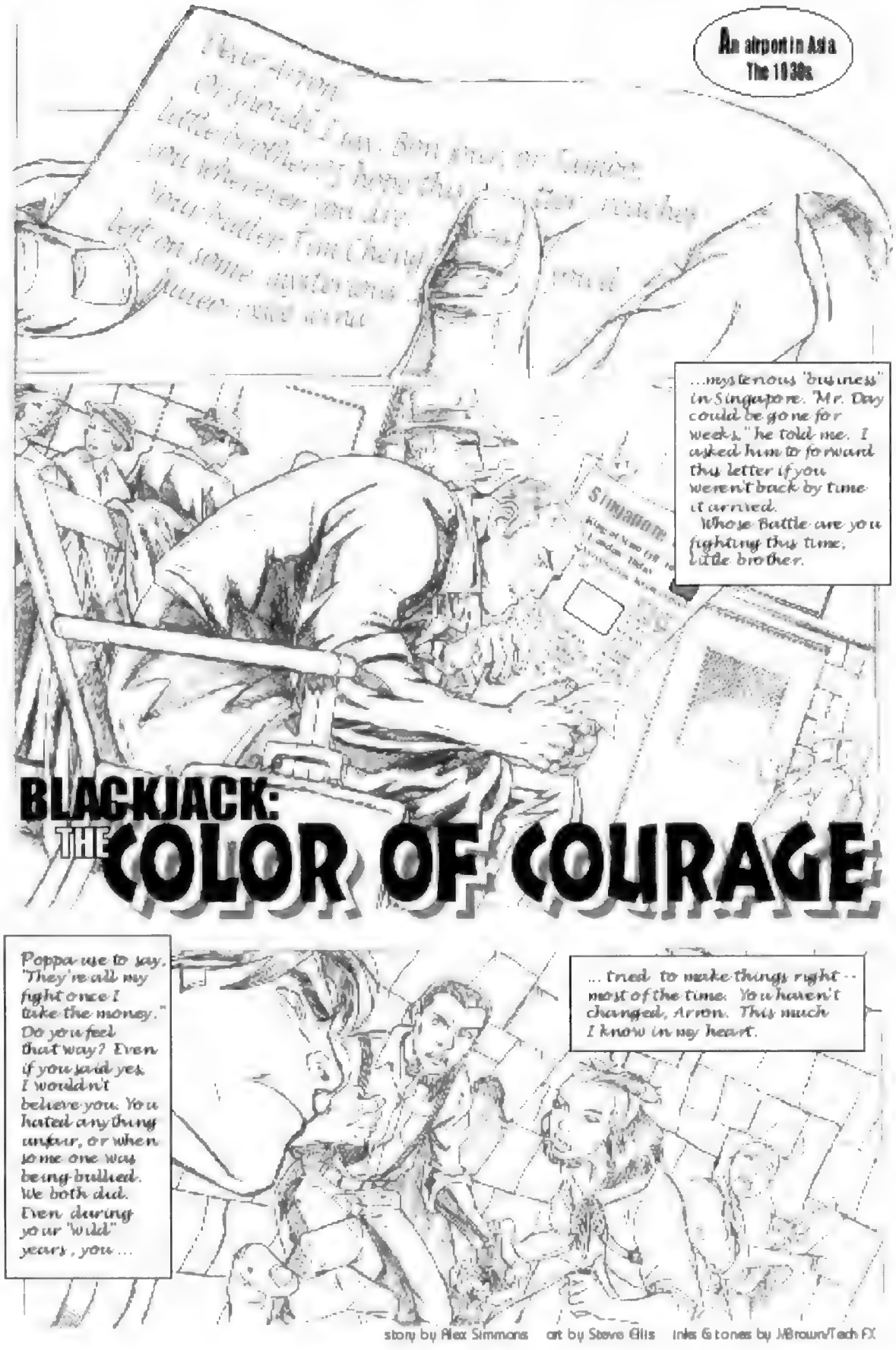
And, you mentioned my teaching twice a week. I do a workshop [titled] The Art of Making Comics. Part of it is based on my experiences in publishing (mainstream and comics). But some of it is based on the *Blackjack* comic books that I do—*Blackjack: Second Bite of the Cobra*, which is the first mini-series, and *Blackjack: Blood and Honor*, which was the mini-series collected into a graphic novel. The stories (short stories and comics) have historical characters mentioned in it, or as part of the plot. Also, within the books themselves, there's a section

I call "Shades of History" which is a page or two of little mini-biographies on people of color, or women of note; [there I discuss] not just people of color, but a lot of people who have discovered, or created, or done something that's helped our world's society at large that you don't hear much about. In my editorials the theme will speak on something similar to the storyline. For instance, in *Blood and Honor* the entire editorial is on the African-American and Japanese-American soldiers who helped liberate two of the Nazi concentration camps during World War II. And this is something, again, you don't read about a lot, and you don't hear a lot about.

In doing that sort of stuff, I found that I am called on to bring out information along those lines and, also, I've done essays on creating comic books and how to add these elements to [them], and why I think the way I do. Also, what it is to do production, and promotion and the hardships of it. But I'm constantly being called to do this at conventions, and in libraries and schools with kids. I try to show them how I create the books, and why and how to develop or to analyze the characters, and so on. Just recently I was given an opportunity to take this curriculum [and] develop it along with three of my close friends—two are teachers and one is

a writer. And it not only deals with the artistic end of it, the writing and the illustration aspects of it, but all the other elements that go into creating comics and comic strips, and how they're used, and how they were used in the past. And it's a great experience for the kids, and several not-for-profit artist groups have invited me to do workshops with their charges.

So for the next year I'll have an opportunity to help children not only understand the art, but also the business of comics. I'll introduce them to the creators and some of the other aspects...that make comics and comic strips what they are, both in the United States and in other parts of the world. Hopefully, this will help stimulate the children's imaginations—help them create their own stories, their own illustrated tales, comic books, and comic strips, whatever they want to do. At the end of that year they will have a nice portfolio piece either for themselves, for their school, or—if they want to pursue illustration and so forth—they will have this exposure and this sort of training that will help them move forward towards that goal.


An airport in Asia
The 1930s
...mysterious "business" in Singapore. Mr. Day could be gone for weeks," he told me. I asked him to forward this letter if you weren't back by time it arrived.
Whose Battle are you fighting this time, little brother.
BLACKJACK:
THE COLOR OF COURAGE
Poppa use to say, "They're all my fight once I take the money." Do you feel that way? Even if you said yes, I wouldn't believe you. You hated anything unfair, or when some one was being bullied. We both did. Even during your "wild" years, you ...
... tried to make things right -- most of the time. You haven't changed, Arron. This much I know in my heart.
story by Alex Simmons art by Steve Ellis Inks & tones by MBrown/Tech FX

CBM: What prompted the creation of Blackjack, and how did you develop it into the series it is today?

Simmons: In essence, I grew up watching a lot of action TV shows and [similar] things. That was my mainstay of entertainment. I mean, I read comic books, but I watched a lot of television and movies, and enjoyed them tremendously. I got a kick out of the action heroes and sort of emulated them in my childhood playtime. In my teens I was introduced to [movie] serials, by Republic predominantly, but, again, [these featured] action heroes, high adventure, travel, bigger than life demons and bad guys, and all that sort of stuff. That was cool!

Through most of that, I could pretend to be certain heroes, certain characters. But there was never any representation of African-Americans or blacks in them that was also in the heroic form. If they were in the movie, or in the TV show, it was for comic relief predominantly. Once in a while someone was a train conductor, or boot black, or a butler, that sort of thing. But we weren't anywhere else in the structure of the piece. And, after a while, as much as some of my people get angered by that, I was just…disappointed…let down.

It was distressing to me. I mean, come on! I knew we were there. I knew we were doing things, important things. I'd

read some history on blacks. I knew some of the things we did during various wars, and such. So where the heck were we in those movies and shows, and why couldn't some of us be those heroes? Because in real life somehow it must have happened. It did happen. I knew why. Those serials were from the '30s and '40s—the TV shows were from the '50s and '60s. I knew what the general attitude and image of blacks were back then. And in the '70s, I knew how many people were changing the image of African-Americans, but there was so much more that needed to be said and shared, with everyone.

In that feeling came a desire to create a hero who was black; and I mean that in exactly that order. To create an action hero, who was black, who lived during those bygone times.

So, somewhere around 1985, I started creating [Arron Day, who is] the hero Blackjack. *Blackjack* is the story of an African-American soldier-of-fortune living in the 1930s, facing global dangers, the ghosts of his past and the bigotry of his time.

Once I created the premise of the series, and worked out a couple of story lines, I then felt the need to do historical and geographical research work. I wanted to be able to weave a strong image of the world around him, and to build some of the story elements out of that reality.

In doing that, I started coming across stories about blacks who had actually experienced things like this in that time period. Whether they were part of the North Pole expedition, or whether they were fighting in World War II, or World War I for France.

These discoveries enforced my desire to do these stories, but it also added a desire to make the historical aspects of the stories more important—not just a simple, light backdrop. Sometimes I tied the stories into actual historical events in that era. I hoped this would help make my African-American hero more of a human being. I always wanted the audience to learn more about him as a person at the same time that he was having these great adventures! I wanted everybody and anybody who was interested in that kind of material to jump on board and say, "Yeah, this is a great ride! This is a wonderful series, I'm going to stick with it."

So that was pretty much how he was created, and where he came from.

CBM: And you've published a few mini-series featuring his adventures so far, right?

Simmons: Right. Two, actually, equaling about seven or eight issues. I stopped thinking of *Blackjack* as a comic book series about the second book into the second series, and I'll mention why [I take that attitude] in a second.

We did two mini-series. The first one was called *Blackjack: Second Bite of the Cobra*, and the second was called *Blackjack: Blood and Honor*. Each series was originally meant to be produced as individual issues of a 24-page comic book. The first two issues of *Second Bite of the Cobra* were 24 [pages each], and the third was 32, to finish everything off. And then we did the first two issues of *Blood and Honor* at 24 pages, and we were finding that, despite all of the great reviews, press, as well as praise from fans and peers—tons of retailers didn't know about *Blackjack*.

Now, some of this was because the book was an independent, or because they weren't hearing enough about it (we didn't have a huge budget for marketing).

They didn't know about the series, so they weren't ordering much, or weren't ordering it at all. Some assumed because it wasn't "bad girl T&A," or super powered, or had an African-American lead [that] it had a little universal appeal.

Over a two-year period, I'd go to conventions and [meet] retailers, and they'd go, "Oh, this is Blackjack," "Oh, I thought it was a black and white book," or "I thought it was

of lesser quality," or "I thought it was about something entirely different." I didn't realize this, I didn't realize that.

Many would order at that point, but the orders were trickling in. It was all happening too slowly. And so, financially, it was not plausible to continue this way.

So we took the second mini-series and, rather than finishing off the last two individual issues, we just did the next printing as the entire story, all four issues, in a graphic novel. That opened up the door to many, many, many more retailers—especially outside the comic book industry. I say especially because, unfortunately, it has suffered tremendous downsizing. A lot of retail stores that were there when we started in '96 are not there anymore.

CBM: So, how did the Tarzan/Blackjack crossover come about?

Simmons: [Laughter] Well, for one, it took quite some time. I can't even say that I knew I would ever team up Blackjack with anybody when I started the series. And then, back in '98, when one of the senior editors over at United Features Syndicate, Amy Lago, became aware of Blackjack and actually liked the series. We began talking about the possibility of developing a syndicated comic strip of Blackjack.

The difficulties were finding the right story, artist, and so forth to do a comic strip and to really convince, shall we say, certain buyers out there that this is the way to go. You may be aware that adventure comic strips have been doing very poorly in the United States. I understand that is not the case in Europe and other parts of the world. But in the US we seem to favor the one shot jokes or cartoons, or the humor strips, which are pretty much self-contained. On Sundays, whatever the joke is, it begins and ends in six panels [or less]. I mean right now there's *Little Orphan Annie* and *Dick Tracy* in a few places. You used to be able to get *Zorro* until the beginning of last year, [but now] that's gone. So it became sort of a quest to figure out how to present Blackjack, despite the odds.

[Then, in] June of 2001, I was invited to start writing the *Tarzan* strip. The first story was drawn by industry veteran, the late Gray Morrow. It was a light-hearted, six-week storyline that I had fun with. But, while I was developing the second story for that strip (drawn by artist Eric Battle), the idea came up of teaming Blackjack with Tarzan. At the time, I wasn't sure it was doable. For one, the Tarzan in the current strip is contemporary, while Blackjack takes place in the 1930s. So there was that little time concern to work out. Then there's just the logic of it—could I do a Tarzan/Blackjack story without totally tossing out certain aspects of the series that I've tried to maintain.

For example, I've never had Blackjack go into the realm of superheroes because I was concerned it would take away the validity of some of the historical information that comes out. You know, it's one thing to say it's a fictional story with

Inspiration Central

ALEX SIMMONS

by Bill Baker

Comic Book Marketplace: Taking into account the fact that you've just been working on a Batman project, and that you'd made a Batman film when you were younger, you must feel like you're realizing a childhood dream in a way.

Alex Simmons: It's funny you should mention that. In one of the recent interviews on that project, I admitted that, personally, I dedicated this project to a friend who is no longer living, a man named Michael. Michael, our mutual friend Angelo, and myself were boyhood buddies [from] junior high through high school. We were like the Three Musketeers. Michael and I had become friends first, and he admitted to me that he and Angelo had made Batman and Robin costumes. This is like when we were 13 or 14 years old. Well, Angelo got a little ticked off about it, because he wanted to keep it a secret; he was afraid that people would laugh at them, I guess. I said, "I'm not going to laugh." So we got to talking at Michael's house and they showed me their costumes—hand made, hand sewn—and they actually looked pretty darn good. I have photos of them. I wound up being a villain and they made me a costume...[of] which I'm happy to say there are no pictures left, because I looked pretty much like some oversized strawberry on a rampage. But, nevertheless, a friend of Michael's mother had a Super 8 camera and he filmed two little movies of us doing this, and we also did a fashion show at a school. We were the entertainment in between the two sessions. It was Batman and Robin stopping thieves from robbing the fashion show and, once again, I was the villain. This was also one of those times when people changed choreography during a fight, so some of us wound up with a split lip, and a bruised this and that, but it was all wild, great fun. And instead of us getting into trouble in a lot of ways that were, shall we say, convenient to boys coming up in an urban environment...we were doing this. We kept it pretty much a secret from just about everybody, except for maybe five close friends who wound up playing villains and things in our productions.

But then you hit high school and you sort of slowly go your separate ways.

[continued on page 60]

some historical elements added. It's another thing to start really making it extreme fantasy, if you will, and bring in superheroes and all this, because then it becomes really convoluted. So, with the Tarzan story, I thought, "For all intents and purposes, he doesn't wear a mask. He doesn't have super powers, per se. He is more of a human being that happens to be phenomenal at what he does, and so, on that level, I think that they can meet. That left, as I just said earlier, the time era to work out. Hopefully, I did that successfully. Time will tell.

So you see, this was a process that took about two years to make happen.

CBM: What can you tell us about the basic plot of the crossover, "Day of the Hunter," that began running in the *Tarzan* Sunday strips January of 2002?

Simmons: What I can say is this: I started with a story that involves Tarzan's bizarre encounter with two dangerous men. One of them, for all intents and purposes, is about to release a deadly experiment into the wilds of Africa—something that will threaten hundreds of lives, both human and animal. The other may just kill Tarzan.

CBM: One final question: Any thoughts on the place of fictional heroes in today's world?

Simmons: I was working on this storyline in August, and had it pretty much worked out, and suddenly we're hit with September 11th. And that tragedy numbed a large community of artists that I know—let alone the rest of mankind. I say mankind, as opposed to just "New Yorkers" or "American citizens" because there were tons of responses that I received and read about from people all over the world. They wrote saying, "I hope you're all right," "It's terrible what happened," "You have the best regards of the people of such and such." So, when September 11th came, for a few weeks after... I had difficulty writing anything. Trying to remember who I am—meaning my core and what I'm about, and why I do what I do, and what I should be doing now, and how has the world changed—I was going through all those things.

And [then,] when I finally got back to working on the Tarzan storyline, by that point we'd had our first couple of anthrax scares here in New York and Washington. [So] I was looking at my story, and I was looking at this real life scenario, and saying, "Should I be writing this stuff at this point? This is no longer entertainment; this is a reflection of real life. Should I be dealing with that?" I went through a sort of personal quest in order to decide how I was going to deal with all of this—if I was going to. In the end, I made some decisions that affected me more so than the story. They affected how I think about what I do, about what's come before, during times of tragedy, going back to even World War II, and how the public, both the entertainment [industry] and working public, dealt with that. So this storyline, in some ways, reflects some of the things that are going on right now. And, I think, with both Blackjack and Tarzan up against the threat, it adds another dimension to it, and reminds me (and hopefully others) what it's like when good people stand together. Of course, that's just my humble opinion.

INSPIRATION CENTRAL

[continued from page 59]

Michael was a great musician, and he was playing for bands and things—but, unfortunately, [he] got seduced by the negative side of that, and wound up involved in drugs. I mean here's a guy who saved my life once, here's a guy who'd give you the shirt off his back—a sweet human being, and a talented one—and he died of an overdose.

Neither Angelo nor I can forget him. Every now and then, when we talk, we realize that we still wish we could have been there, somehow, to save him from that. There's a part of you that feels, "If I'd only done something differently! If I'd only been there, I could have stopped this!" And, logically, you understand, no, that's probably not what would have happened. But you kind of wish-hope-pray-feel the opposite.

Twice I've admitted that something I did, related to the Batman, was for Michael. One was when the first Batman movie was in production. I think DC had a contest, where you wrote in 50 words or less about why you'd like to go to the set in England and watch them film the movie. I wrote a little 50-word essay about Michael and Angelo and I, and the fact that Michael is no longer with us, and I'd like to be there for him. I didn't win the trip, but I won [some] nice posters and pins and things like that.

The second time was an interview I did earlier this year on the *Batman: Orpheus Rising* project. Now I've told you. I put a picture of Michael and Angelo and I up in my workspace, while I was working on this project. Now and again, I would look at it and remember those times, and what the character meant to us, and what we would have done if we had been in a Batman adventure. I let my imagination move in those directions, because sometimes it helped me get through a difficult part of the writing. Sometimes it just helped relieve some stress as I sat there, [thinking,] "I'm not quite sure if this scene's going to work, and I've been at it for three hours!" and blah, blah, blah. And I would remember those times, and I'd feel better about it all.

So, in some ways, this project, a little of it goes out to him, and the memory of him.

KEVIN SMITH 'ACTOR' EVENT SELLS OUT TO RAISE $8000

Fundraising night benefits comic book charity

LOS ANGELES, June 4, 2002—ACTOR (A Commitment To Our Roots), the non-profit organization dedicated to helping older comic creators in need, is pleased to announce that its May 31 fundraising event with film writer/director Kevin Smith was a rousing success. ACTOR sold out the 541-seat Writers Guild Theater in Beverly Hills, CA for "Silent Bob Speaks: A Night With Kevin Smith" and raised over $8000 for its fund.

Smith entertained the sellout crowd for over two hours with tales of his careers in movies and comics, including his upcoming film release, "Jersey Girl," and his upcoming Marvel Comics series, *Spider-Man/Black Cat: The Evil that Men Do*. "That everyone had a good time would've been satisfying enough, but the fact that we raised a chunk of change for ACTOR at the same time made the whole evening a blast," Smith said.

The evening's revenues were enhanced by Los Angeles' Golden Apple Comics, which sold Smith-written comics and Smith-written-and-directed DVDs in the theater lobby, with all net proceeds benefiting ACTOR.

The night was also a media sensation. The Los Angeles *Times* made "Silent Bob Speaks: A Night With Kevin Smith" a "Best Bet" in its Calendar section, and the event was also covered by *LA Weekly*, the UCLA *Daily Bruin*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, Tech TV, KCRW radio and KROQ radio.

PHOTO BY PAUL SCHIRALDI

About ACTOR.

ACTOR (A Commitment to Our Roots) is dedicated to providing relief and support to many of the talented creators who helped found the comic book industry. Many Golden Age or Silver Age creators toiled in comics' earlier days for low pay and with a nonexistent pension plan. Today, many of these people who laid the groundwork for today's industry may be in financial need. Be it due to age, health, or just low salaries with no retirement plan, they may need a hand. ACTOR provides a safety net for former comic creators in need. ACTOR is dedicated to helping creators with emergency medical aid, financial support, and entrance back into paying work.

ACTOR's 501 (c) (3) application requesting status as an official non-profit organization was approved by the federal government in February 2001.

For more information or to send donations to ACTOR please contact:

ACTOR (A Commitment To Our Roots)
11301 Olympic Blvd, #587
Los Angeles, CA 90064
310-268-1530

ACTOR
In The Spotlight

ACTOR, A Commitment To Our Roots, has been around less than two years, but in that short period the organization has become a recognizable force that supports comic creators in need. We caught up with Jim McLauchlin at the recent Wizard East Philadelphia Show where he gave us an in-depth look at the organization.

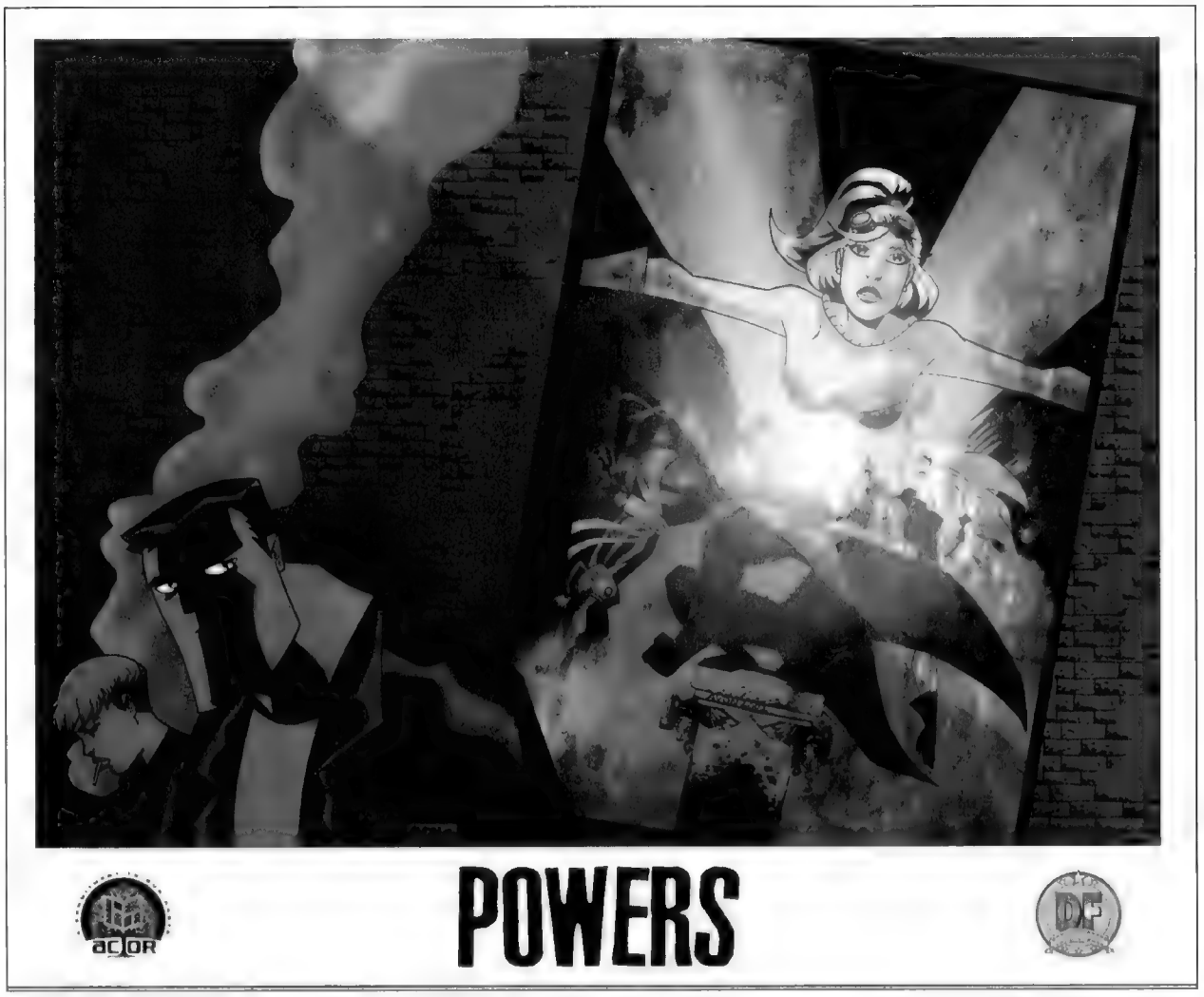
Comic Book Marketplace: For the readers that might be unaware of what it is, could you please tell us what ACTOR is all about?

Jim McLauchlin: In a nutshell, it's an emergency fund or safety net for comic creators. Comics have long been a freelance business on the creative end, and things like pension plans or retirement funds are practically nonexistent. Couple that with the fact that most Golden Age and Silver Age creators didn't exactly make a lot of money and had no chance of ownership of their creations, and you wind up with an entire generation of great, talented, hard-working folk, who, through no fault of their own, may have financial needs. There's a bunch of creators, probably 40 years worth of publishing out there, who laid the groundwork that today's entire comic business is built on. If they have need, we're there to help them with bills, medical expenses, or sometimes, just quality-of-life expenses.

Things like this are notoriously common in other fields. I used to be a sportswriter, and Major League Baseball had a similar fund called BAT "Baseball Assistance Team." They realized that players even into the late 1960s might only have been making $10,000 a year, and many of those old players who built baseball into what it is today might have needs. Now that salaries are much higher in baseball, they're taking care of their own. Things like this here, there, and everywhere exist. The local plumbers union in your town probably has one for retired plumbers. But there's never been one in comics until now.

CBM: Who came up with the original idea for ACTOR?

McLauchlin: If you must assess blame, you could say that I'm guilty, and Mark Alessi of CrossGen Comics is



The Powers Lithograph by artist Michael Oeming (from the Brian Bendis/Oeming series **POWER**S, published by Image Comics, is one of ACTOR's recent fund-raising tools.

complicit. I always supported every BAT fundraiser that came across my desk when I was a sportswriter, and Mark's a big baseball fan as well—Red Sox, in particular, the poor guy. I talked to Mark a few times about BAT, and how I thought it was a crying shame that something similar didn't exist in comics. I told him that it was always in the back of my head to start something like that for comics, and he called my bluff.

CBM: When was ACTOR first seriously discussed, and how long did it take to go from discussion to reality?

McLauchlin: The first time was probably summer of 2000. Mark loved the idea of a charitable organization for comic creators, and mentioned that he had lawyers on retainer already at CrossGen. He offered to get them working on framing a corporation and filling out the paperwork. He helped me considerably in coming up with a structure, and visualizing what the organization would be. I started balking early on, realizing that this was really a large, and admittedly scary, undertaking. He kept pushing me, and truth be told, I'm damn glad he did. Simply put, he gave me the balls to start this. The other thing Mark and CrossGen did was throw one metric butt load of support and money behind us. Not a lot of people really know this, but you can't just hang out a shingle and start Mom's Homemade Charity at the drop of a hat. I don't want to say the feds discourage philanthropy, but they sure like to make sure you're serious about it. The paperwork alone that you have to file with the federal government could choke a goat. And it's not like it's the 1099-EZ Form, either. You really need lawyers to do this. It takes a minimum of $5000 in legal fees, usually closer to $10,000, just to get off the ground and certified as a real, honest-to-God charity. CrossGen footed the bill for all that. We were official by early 2001, February, I believe. Our first main fundraisers were at the 2001 Orlando MegaCon, which CrossGen operates, also in February. We ran an art auction that netted well over $60,000, and MegaCon donated $1 per admission to ACTOR, for another $10,000+. We started with a nest egg of about $70,000. In terms of initial donations, both in hard cash paid to the lawyers and God-only-knows what kind of man-hours that went into the auction and whatnot, CrossGen launched us with, geez, probably about $30,000 right off the bat.

CBM: What was involved in getting ACTOR off the ground?

McLauchlin: Aside from the mega-paperwork angle, which was largely invisible to me with the exception of signing and notarizing many, many documents, it was largely forming the two Boards of Directors.

CBM: Could you give a little detail about how ACTOR works—the difference between the fund raising arms of ACTOR versus the disbursement end?

McLauchlin: Yeah. We basically have two Boards of Directors. The Executive/Fund-raising Board is made up of big kahunas from pretty much every major publisher in the biz. There's me and Pat McCallum from Wizard Entertainment, Mark at CrossGen, Joe Quesada from

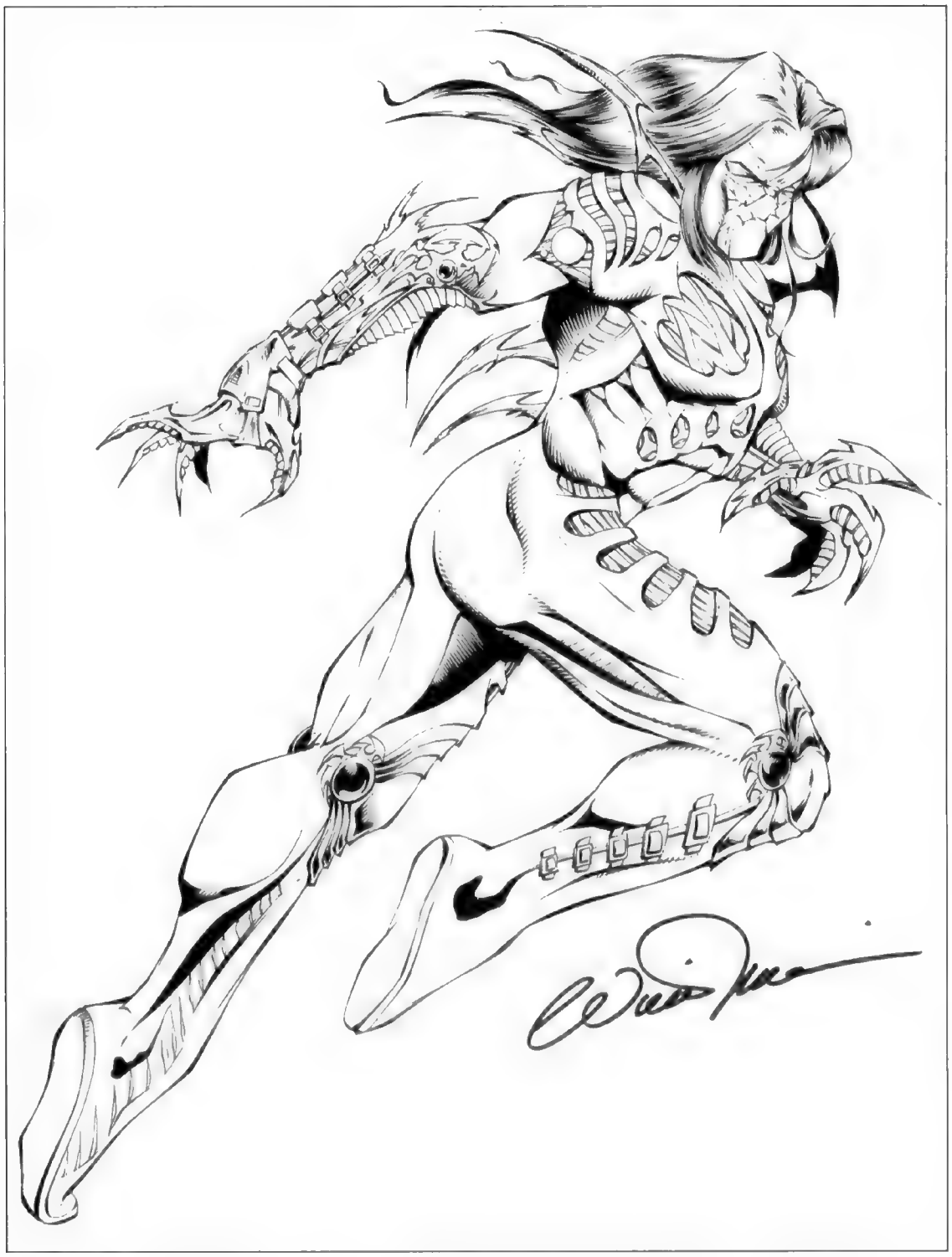
"Guardian Angels," a lithograph featuring characters from CrossGen's **Sigil**, as drawn by Nick Cardy. This ACTOR benefit product solicited for October.

Marvel, Jim Valentino at Image, Brian Pulido from Chaos! and Mike Richardson of Dark Horse. We're the folks who administrate the fund, and take care of fund-raising operations.

The Disbursement Committee is what I like to call a "peer group." It's guys who, by and large, are probably of the same generation of many of the guys and gals we'll be helping. Mark really helped formulate this again, coming up with the idea to make it some of the "elder statesmen" on this crew. The Disbursement Committee is Denny O'Neil, Joe Kubert, Roy Thomas, George Perez, Dick Giordano and John Romita, Sr. Their only job is to dole out money to worthy recipients. It's really a church and state operation. The Disbursement Committee doesn't have to do anything to raise funds, and the Fund-raising Board has no say in who gets the money. Due to federal regulations, I have to serve on both committees, so technically I have a vote in disbursement matters. But I've told the Disbursement guys I'm just there to vote with the majority and ratify their vote. It's their show. The Disbursement Committee, to me, is really the important part. These guys are legends, and their names alone carry such weight. A guy like Joe Kubert, just to pick one, is a giant on the earth. Look at what he's done in his career and his life! There are always nay-sayers out there, and people who want to be nit-pickers. But when you say you've got a guy like Joe Kubert on your board that makes a lot of people take notice. I've run into a kajillion people who want to support the organization, and maybe three or four who have doubts. I think it's because we have guys with such integrity on our side.

CBM: The fund-raising efforts have been very successful. Could you elaborate as far as the type of fundraisers and the amount raised?

McLauchlin: The big things have been three art auctions, at the Orlando MegaCon in 2001 and 2002, and Wizard World Chicago in 2001. Each time, we got well over 100 lots from artists, and we've raised a grand total of about $170,000 in those auctions. There have also been a number of smaller fundraisers, and just random donations. One guy just sent us a check for $500 out of the clear blue sky. He said he just believed in what we were



A Bill Tucci "Darkness" cover that will be auctioned off as a part of the Orlando auction, March 1, 2003.

doing and wanted to help. He didn't want any receipt, any tax write-off, and asked that if we publish a list of donors we keep his name out of it. He just wanted to help.

CBM: I understand that when ACTOR helps out creators in need, they do it under the condition of their anonymity. How much money has been paid out to help creators that you can't talk about?

McLauchlin: To date, $5000 to one recipient. Most everyone has been very supportive and very public about funds they've received. They want to help spread the word. But it's always at their discretion.

CBM: And of course, there have been several high-profile cases that ACTOR can talk about. Could you give us two or three specific ones so that people can see real-life instances of how ACTOR has helped out creators?

McLauchlin: Two quick ones where the recipients are fully supportive of our talking about it are Pocho Morrow and William Messner-Loebs. Pocho is the widow of Gray Morrow. When Gray passed away in November 2001, ACTOR was able to step in and take care of his funeral expenses. We have a clause in our bylaws that allows us to help out with expenses like these for an estate when someone passes on. We dealt directly with the funeral home, and totally eliminated both an expense and a paperwork headache for Pocho.

Bill Messner-Loebs got into some financial arrears when his workload dropped, and we were able to give him an infusion of cash for day-to-day stuff such as groceries and bills, and we're ready to help out again when he gets a plan together to refinance his mortgage. We've also helped as much as possible to give him entry with editors and publishers we work with to get him some more work. He's sent in several pitches, and has some new stuff cooking.

CBM: ACTOR has been branching out with a number of events. Fill us in about the Kevin Smith event.

McLauchlin: Kevin's been a GREAT supporter of the organization, and we cooked up an idea to rent the Writer's Guild Theater here in LA and sell tickets to "Silent Bob Speaks: A Night With Kevin Smith." It's similar to the college lectures he gives when he tours campuses. It went great. We sold out a 540-seat theater at $15 a pop, and after expenses and all—the Writer's Guild is a not-for-profit as well, and it isn't like they give the theater away for free—we were able to net several thousand bucks. Kev has been great—he's done the "Night With" event, he's been guest auctioneer at a couple of our

auctions—he's done it all. He's a good egg.

CBM: I noticed that ACTOR also has some merchandise, like t-shirts…

McLauchlin: Yeah. Charlie Novinskie of Ground Zero, who also doubles as the Secretary to the Disbursement Committee, set us up with a sweetheart deal with a T-shirt manufacturer, then Marvel Comics and Sean Chen stepped up to the plate. Marvel gave us permission to use the Wolverine vs. Ultimate Wolverine art from a "Last Man Standing" strip in Wizard as the image on a T-shirt, and Sean, who had drawn it, was gracious enough to let us use it again without any kind of compensation. I think I offered to give him a free shirt, and he insisted on paying for it.

They're available at $15 a pop. We've also got a few lithos in the works, using Dynamic Forces license with some of the publishers. There's an Alex Ross Spider-Man litho, a Michael Avon Oeming Powers litho, and we'll have a Nick Cardy CrossGen one coming soon. All the stuff can be ordered via Dynamic. If you check out their Website at www.dynamicforces.com, they've got an entire page of stuff dedicated to ACTOR.

CBM: Obviously, everyone can help out by making cash donations to ACTOR, which are totally tax deductible—how else can a person help out?

McLauchlin: We're always taking art donations for our next auction. If you're an artist and you'd like to pony

up, we'd love your help. People can send donations, be they art or cash, to:

ACTOR
11301 Olympic Blvd. #587
Los Angeles, CA 90064

We also need some trustworthy volunteers to run booths at comic conventions, and professionals with specialized knowledge to lend some support to the organization, computer techs, layout and design artists, and certified accountants are always needed. If you can do that, write to the address above, or fax us at 775-993-1603. After that, use your imagination. I got a call from a movie theater manager who was running some *Spider-Man* promotions on opening weekend, and they managed to raise a few bucks for us on the side. Stuff like that is always appreciated. Same drill: write to that same address above, or fax us at 775-993-1603.

CBM: Also, if a professional, fan, storeowner—anyone involved in comics—knows of a creator that may have a need of ACTOR's services, how can they relay that information?

McLauchlin: Best bet is to contact the aforementioned Charlie Novinskie. He's there to make things easy for our Disbursement Committee. He can be contacted at:

Charlie Novinskie
625 Colony Road
Clifton, CO 81520

Or you can call him at 970-523-3575, or e-mail: charlienovinskie@hotmail.com.

CBM: Why do you think that ACTOR has been so overwhelmingly received and been such a success from day one?

McLauchlin: At the risk of sounding hokey, the answer I keep coming back to is that it really "resonates" with people. Comics is an affinity hobby—people read, collect, network and do whatever else they do in comics because they like to. They have affinity for the medium, and they have affinity for the people who put together the stories that inspired them, and that they got so much enjoyment out of. It's a nice feeling to give a little back. People like that feeling, pure and simple. I don't think it's anything more complicated than that.

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DC Gets Their Props

Collectable Character Statues

by Mike Wilbur

In 1999, as a companion to their successful line of comic character statues, **DC Direct** initiated a line of "props."

Basically, the props are full-size representations of weapons, equipment, or accessories used by various DC Comics characters in the course of their adventures.

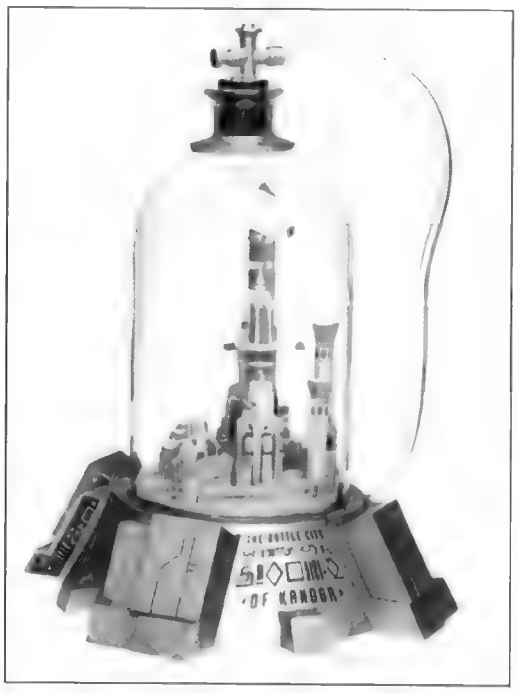
The line was launched with the release of **Batman**'s **Batarang**. Cast in pewter and affixed to a real walnut base, the Batarang was an impressively produced and presented piece. A miniature version of the Batarang prop was released about a year later.

The next noteworthy release was the **Kryptonite** prop. Featuring a cold-cast porcelain base etched with "actual" Kryptonian hieroglyphics, the Kryptonite took the prop line to the next level with an interesting interactive function. When you removed the "leaded" glass dome, the green crystalline mass would glow with released "radiation."

Kryptonite. Don't lift the "leaded-glass" dome, or you risk exposure to the green radiation!

The next interactive prop was the metallic green **Power Battery** of Silver Age **Green Lantern** Hal Jordan. The Power Battery prop included a wearable reproduction of Jordan's power ring. The battery emits a green glow when the ring is touched to the battery's contact surface. As a follow-up, a similarly interactive replica of the Power Battery of Golden-Age Green Lantern Alan Scott was released in early-Spring '02. Next in this particular sub-series, the Power Battery of Hal Jordan's predecessor, alien Green Lantern Abin Sur, is targeted for a Spring '03 release.

The third of the interactive props was the **Bottle City of Kandor**, from **Superman**'s Silver Age. With a base sculpted to be complementary to the earlier Kryptonite prop, the Bottle City illuminates when the concealed switch is activated. Another functional prop was a miniature version of the **Bat-Signal** (kind of hard to mass-produce and market a *full-sized* searchlight with a bat painted on the lens).



Bottle City of Kandor. Stolen from Krypton and miniaturized by evil android Brainiac, as first recounted in **Action Comics** #242 (7/58).

Non-interactive props were also released interspersed around the interactive ones. These included **Ring** of Silver Age **Flash** Barry Allen (partially opened to reveal his super-compressed red costume stored within), and the **Tiara**, **Bracelets** and **Earrings** of **Wonder Woman**.

Also featured in the props line are a series of four inter-related **Green Lantern** items. This series-within-a-series consists of mini-busts of

Bat Signal. A great piece that got an undeservedly bad rap when originally released.

Alan Scott's Power Battery. The source of power for the Golden Age Green Lantern.

COLLECTABLE CHARACTER STATUES

Overall, the props have been well-produced, well-received and good sellers. The only item in the line thus far that received a less-than-warm reception has been the **Bat-Signal**.

The "problem" retailers and consumers had with the Bat-Signal was quite subjective. It's a beautifully designed and detailed piece. The packaging is superb. It has just one "flaw," if you really want to call it that. It's made of plastic. Many buyers accustomed to the beefy cold-cast resin construction of the previous releases in the props line felt shortchanged by the "cheap" plastic construction of the piece.

When questioned about the Bat-Signal at the first annual DC Direct panel discussion at ComiCon International 2001 in San Diego, DC's Design Director Georg Brewer explained that they had been faced with a three-option decision over the Bat-Signal prototype. Due to the intricacy of the functional mechanics, there was a choice of compromises. They could have produced the piece as designed, but in cold-cast resin, and at a significantly higher price point. They could have produced the piece in resin with greatly reduced range of motion and function of the final product. Or, they could construct it from less expensive/more durable materials, with full function retained. They rolled the dice, and chose the latter.

Ironically, due to the Bat-Signal's poor initial reception, it will likely become highly sought after on the secondary market by those who passed it up in the beginning. "Questionable" construction notwithstanding, the Bat-Signal is a beautifully executed piece, and a worthy addition to any Bat-collector's display.

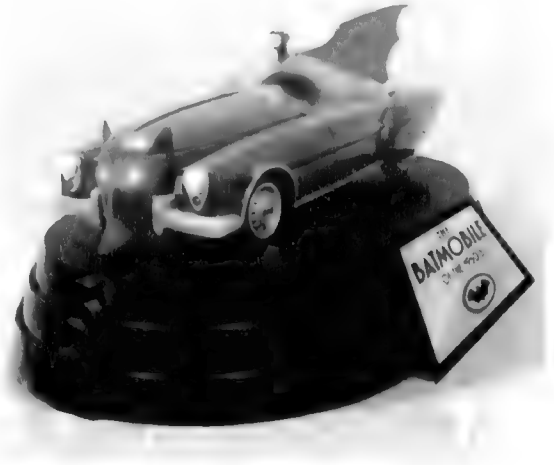
four characters from the Green Lantern mythos, each watching over a life-sized reproduction of his respective power ring. The first release of this series was Golden-Age GL Alan Scott. Subsequently released were Silver-Age GL Hal Jordan and renegade GL (and mortal enemy of Hal Jordan) Sinestro. Current GL Kyle Rayner is tentatively scheduled for release in Fall '02.

From DC's **Vertigo** imprint, we saw the **Key to the Gates of Hell** from the **Sandman** series, the wire-framed asymmetrical **Eyeglasses** of gonzo-journalist Spider Jerusalem from the **Transmetropolitan** series, and the **Ankh pendant** of the character Death from the Sandman series.

The most recent prop release is a scale replica of the **1950s Batmobile**. Set on an art-deco-style base, the Batmobile features light-up headlights, taillights and the eyes of the nose-mounted Bat-emblem. Also included is a Batmobile "title" document and a blueprint of the Batmobile.

Other than the two as-yet unreleased Green Lantern items noted above, there are no new props currently posted on the release horizon through 2003. However, DC Direct design and marketing personnel were bouncing ideas off the crowd and taking suggestions (and copious notes for later evaluation) at the second annual DC Direct panel at San Diego's ComiCon International in 2002. The most notable suggestion came from popular comics writer Mark Waid, who stuck his head in the door at the beginning of the session and demanded to know "Where's my damn **Phantom Zone Projector**?"

Wonder Woman Props. The tiara, earrings and bullet-deflecting bracelets worn by the Amazon princess.



Batmobile of the 1950s. More a miniature replica than an actual prop, still a cool display piece.

Hammer of Thor. This first Marvel prop released by Factory X was an immediate sell-out.

Other Players

As a quick note, it should be mentioned that, while DC Direct is in the forefront of super-hero props, others are getting into the act.

Factory X, a producer of movie prop replicas, entered the comics props arena in 2001 with the launch of their life-size **Marvel** props line.

Their first release was a massive and impressive production of the **Hammer of Thor**. With a (hollow) cast aluminum head, and wooden handled wrapped in genuine leather, the hammer measures nearly two feet long and weighs almost 10 pounds. Their second release was the **Sais of Elektra**, the Oriental short-swords of **Daredevil**'s college girlfriend-turned-assassin. Next out was the **Shield of Captain America**, a 30-inch painted aluminum disc with genuine leather arm straps.

In the Factory X pipeline are replicas of **Iron Man's** helmet, **Doctor Doom's** mask, and the **Needle Gun and Badge of Nick Fury**.

Not to be left on the sidelines, **Diamond Select** recently solicited the first of their life-size Marvel props, **Spider-Man's Web-Shooters.**

A whole new frontier is opening up for the aficionado of high-end comics collectibles, with the expansion of props offerings. Now, you can not only have 3D miniatures of your favorite characters, you can also wield life-size replicas of their tools of the trade.

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We had a couple of readers write in with their questions—Thanks! Answers are provided by Steve Borock, Primary Grader, CGC.

I love **Comic Book Marketplace** almost as much as I love old comics. I have appreciated CGC grading whenever I have purchased off the Internet from sellers that I do not know well. The issues I have purchased I find useful as grading guides. I think it is a great idea to post some answers to questions we may have about CGC grading. I think my questions are probably quite typical of other collectors so I expect you have seen these already, but in case not here goes.

Restoration checking. How is it done exactly? Can they provide a step-by-step process so we can know how they do it? I am especially interested in how the color touch checking is performed.

*[**CGC: The restoration check is performed by Chris Friesen before any grader sees the comic book and then once again by either Mark Haspel or Steve Borock when they are giving the final grade. It is first checked by eye and then, in cases where we are suspicious but not sure, we use a microscope and/or a black light. As far as a "step-by-step" of the process, if there are enough people asking for it, CGC would think about giving a restoration seminar at one of the major conventions.**]*

What is the difference between Slight, Moderate and Extensive restoration?

*[**CGC: The difference is based on the amount of restoration performed on the comic. For example, Slight might just have a small amount of color touch and two tear seals to the cover, or just cover cleaned. Moderate might have that same amount of restoration plus a two-inch piece replaced. Extensive might have large pieces replaced, moderate amount of color touch, a reinforced spine and tear seals.**]*

Census information.

- Is there a census available for page color?

- Is there other comprehensive data available like average grade per year or publisher?

- Can census information be provided by pedigree/provenance (named collection)?

- Will there be a publication (maybe electronic?) of more census information?

*[**CGC: All of the census services that you ask about are not available at this time. We are looking into many of the things that you mentioned and we will possibly be doing some of them in the future.**]*

Well, thanks for considering these queries. I am looking forward to reading more about how CGC works. I think it may become one of the central data stores of information on grades of comics and numbers in existence. I have always felt the **Gerber Photo Journal** has over-estimated the numbers of higher-grade comics in existence today.

*[**CGC: While we at CGC feel that the Gerber Photo Journal is one of the most important books in our hobby, we also feel that the CGC census report over the next few years will become an indispensable tool for the entire hobby for getting realistic figures of what number of Gold and Silver Age comic books have survived over the years.**]*

Thanks for listening,
Brian Ousler

I have a question concerning your page quality system. I have seen page quality ratings on your labels from its lowest tier, "Brittle Pages" to the highest tier, "White Pages." My question is about the combinations you use, like "Cream to Off-white Pages." Is that an actual assigned grade (similar to VF/NM) or does that mean the edges are "Cream" and the inner part of the pages is "Off-white"?

The reason I ask is because on many, many labels you have put, "Tan to Off-white Pages" or "Light-Tan to Off-white Pages." These assigned page notations cover may levels of page quality. Obviously in these cases the edges are "Tan" and the interior part is "Off-white," but

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The Michael Naiman Report
A Walk Down the Aisle...

and then some....

This year's **San Diego** show had a little bit of everything for everybody. With over 350,000 square feet of exhibit space covering five city blocks one could find just about anything. 65,000 people had their choice of over 900 exhibitors to pick from. At first glance, the "White Box Crowd" of exhibitors (you know—actual comic book vendors) seemed to be a shrinking percentage of the sellers.

However, according to Beth Holley, Vice President of Exhibits, "...this year, there were actually 60 more comic book dealers than the year before. Because the hall was expanded by 50,000 square feet, it gave the illusion that there might have been fewer comic book sellers. In fact, our comic book vendors actually purchased more booth space than the year before. On Wednesday morning during exhibitor registration, we had a waiting list of over 20 different sellers who wanted to set up. We just couldn't accommodate everyone who wanted to be there. Our surveys indicate that almost everyone made more money this year than last year."

Holley added, "Based on preliminary sign-ups, it looks as if we will be expanded into Hall F next year. Look for a major Southern California amusement park and one of the top movie studios to take up a large portion of that hall."

Many dealers opined that the SD show is now all about the licensed comic characters and their corporate sponsors. This is now a Media Show—witness the movie studios cashing in on their latest licensed characters. "Not that it's a Bad Thing—just different! Multi-media is all well and good, but many people I spoke with thought that it might be time to have a comic-book-sellers-only show. Certainly WonderCon is the best opportunity for the California comic book purist to obtain his Holy Grail. With improved programming and maybe a more attractive venue (San Francisco? Mosconi Center?) this show could blossom into a four-color collectors dream. What do you think?

Ars Gratia Artis. Art for the Sake of Art. And that was going on big time at the show. While some people thought it was a museum showing, many of these fabulous original art pieces were selling: Colan Dardedevil #27 cover at $20,000; Adkins(?) X-men #35 cover at $30,000; Kane/Anderson Silver Age Green Lantern cover at $20,000; Romita Amazing Spider-Man #47 splash at $40,000; Murphy Anderson Hawkman #10 cover for $16,800; an interior page to Amazing Spider-Man #6 for $16,800 (most ever!); Tales of Suspense #62 splash page for $3500; 12-page Don Heck story from Tales of Suspense #54 (origin of the Mandarin) for $5000; the cover to World's Finest #188 $5000; Reed Crandall National #25 cover $28,000; Barry Windsor-Smith Thor #38 cover art $5650. One busy California art dealer reported, "Art collectors in general (and those who will spend five figures in particular), don't like to see sales information made public. Thus, a lot of the good stuff goes unreported. But, it certainly was a good show for higher end art (the interiors were slow though). On the higher end I sold a number of nice Neal Adams pieces (including two early 1970s covers, a page from X-Men #59, a vintage Batman sketch and a nice Strange Adventures Deadman page...and even the sketch brought four figures). An Iron Man Annual cover by Hannigan/Milgrom went for $2600. Many other pieces went in trade, including a Ploog Marvel Premiere cover, a Neal Adams Lois Lane cover, the splash to Marvel Team-Up Annual #1 (featuring an early appearance of the new X-Men), Alpha Flight #16 complete interiors by Byrne and a nice page from Marvel Team-Up #100 by Byrne."

Also seen making the rounds at the show was the recently purchased complete story art to Amazing Spider-Man #10—it was being sold one page at a time! Other sales included: Andru Amazing Spider-Man #225 page went for $300; Ploog Kull #11 cover moved at $11,500 cash (in a three way deal); J. Buscema Savage Sword of Conan #15 chapter splash at $700; Starlin Silver Surfer Annual #5 pinup at $1000.

The Big-5 War Comics Collectors' Summit had its 8th annual meeting. The banquet was coordinated by Mick Rabin and sponsored by a corps of dedicated war comics enthusiasts. This year was particularly memorable because it was a gala celebration of DC War Comics' 50th anniversary. The pros in attendance were: Sergio Aragones, Dick Ayers, Ric Estrada, Irv Novick, Sam Glanzman, Bob Haney, Russ Heath and Tom Yeates. All had work published in the pages of the Big-5 war titles. The event was underwritten partly by the sponsoring fans in attendance and partly by funds raised by the artwork auction. Numerous wonderful pieces of art (by artists in attendance and absentia alike) were auctioned as well as reprinted with accompanying bios and creator profiles in the Big-5 souvenir book. The celebration was held this year at The Prado Restaurant in the

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CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#40 GD $129 86%

All American
#84 FN $189 92%

All American Western
#105 VG $107 1.57X

Amazing Spider-Man
#37 VG+ $50 1.25X
#40 VG+ $100 1.5X
#42 VG+ $40 1.18X
#49 FN $50 1.39X
#50 VG+ $80 98%
#54 FN $40 1.48X
#62 FN $36 1.71X
#81 NM- $51 85%
#97 NM- $153 1.18X
#98 VF- $70 91%
#101 NM- $160 91%
#102 NM- $150 1.25X
#122 VG+ $70 2.19X
#194 NM- $25 1.39X

Archie Comics Digest
#1 VG $50 2.77X

Batman
#94 VF $355 1.18X
#98 VF $355 1.18X
#112 FN $128 1.09X
#181 VF $119 2.48X
#237 NM- $109 1.45X
#241 NM- $62 83%
#242 NM- $48 1.37X
#245 NM- $65 1.3X

Blaze Carson
#1 GD $19 70%

Boy Commandos
#15 FN $140 1.16X
#34 GD+ $30 1.36X

Captain America
#104 NM $157 2.61X
#107 NM $81 1.62X

Captain Marvel Adventures
#96 VG $28 56%

Captain Marvel Jr.
#81 VG+ $27 75%

Comedy Comics
#14 FR $42 1.61X

Conan
#3 FN $45 1.07X

Daredevil
#168 NM $621 11.29X

Dennis the Menace
#143 VG $15 3.75X

Detective
#53 GD $100 69%
#64 GD $171 45%
#68 GD $146 89%
#414 NM- $41 1.17X
#415 NM- $44 1.26X
#417 NM- $48 1.37X
#418 NM- $45 1.29X
#421 VF $18 78%

Eerie (Warren)
#8 FN $17 1.42X

Fightin' Marines (1951)
#15 GD $69 7.66X
#17 VG $29 1.04X

Flash
#38 VG $165 79%
#46 VG $165 89%
#93 VG $330 1.27X
#137 FN $28 23%
#196 VF $32 80%

Foom
#1 VF $50 1.66X

Forever People
#2 NM- $40 1.14X

Green Lantern (SA)
#81 NM- $45 82%
#85 NM- $67 89%
#53 VF $20 44%

Green Lantern (GA)
#24 FN $325 92%

Gunhawk
#12 VG $11 28%

Hawkman
#1 VF $199 49%
#23 VF $25 74%
#26 VF $20 59%
#27 VF $20 59%

Hulk
#181 NM $2891 2.63X

Iron Man
#1 NM $462 84%

Jimmy Olsen
#75 VF $15 52%

Johnny Mack Brown
#2 FN+ $8 21%

Katy Keene
#52 GD $22 1.29X
#54 GD $22 1.29X

Katy Keene Comics Digest Mag
#1 VF $12 1.33X

Katy Keene Pinup Parade
#9 VG $49 1.23X
#13 VG $36 90%
#15 VG $100 1.25X

MAD
#1 VG+ $1400 1.34X
#2 FN+ $650 1.55X
#6 VG+ $160 1.33X
#17 FN+ $200 1.74X

Marvel Premiere
#23 NM $18 Guide
#25 NM $23 80%

More Fun
#101 VG $850 55%

Mystery Comics Digest
#1 FN $25 2.08X

Mystic
#7 GD $280 76%

Nightmare (Skywald)
#20 FN $45 3.75X

Our Army at War
#1 VG $320 1.22X
#4 VG $99 1.03X
#6 VG $85 1.04X
#14 VG $69 93%
#233 NM $19 1.05X
#248 NM $18 1.25X
#253 NM $16 97%
#254 NM $20 1.39X
#262 NM $17 1.18X

Our Fighting Forces
#168 NM $7 72%

Ozzie & Harriet
#5 FR $35 1.75X

Psycho
#1 VF $36 95%

Scream
#11 GD $10 3.33X

Scribbly
#13 VG+ $47 69%

Sensation
#56 FN $120 Guide

Showcase
#20 VG $59 38%
#55 GD $20 80%

Soap Opera Love
#3 VF $20 1.18X

Sonic the Hedgehog Mini
#0 VF $25 1.47X
#1 VF $25 1.47X
#2 VF $20 4.82X

Sonic the Hedgehog Ongoing series
#1 VF $25 1.32X

Star Spangled War Stories
#10 VG $55 1.15X
#15 VG $45 1.13X
#143 NM- $50 77%

Strange Adventures
#91 VF $110 1.1X

Sub-Mariner
#1 NM $192 96%

Sunday Pix with Peanuts V12
#20 VF $50 7.14X

Super Rabbit
#6 FN $70 93%

Superboy
#10 FN- $128 48%
#82 VG- $15 75%
#83 VF $27 43%
#86 VF $67 58%
#89 VF $45 66%

Supergirl
#1 VF $27 4.5X

Superman
#245 VF+ $100 1.82X

Teen Titans
#21 NM- $68 1.13X
#22 NM- $64 1.07X

Terrytoons (Timely)
#3 FR $29 3.86X

The Shadow (1973)
#11 NM $23 2.81X

Turok
#1 GD $69 1.15X
#2 VG $69 1.64X
#10 VG $32 1.14X
#27 VF $51 1.21X

Unexpected
#165 NM- $33 3.3X

Vault of Horror
#22 VF $80 37%
#36 FN- $43 53%

Vicki
#4 GD $10 3.33X

Weird War Tales
#3 NM- $79 79%

Wild West
#1 VG- $30 42%

Witching Hour
#62 NM- $9 94%

Wonder Woman
#5 FN- $450 91%
#7 VG- $218 86%
#14 FN $260 87%
#17 VG+ $125 63%
#23 FN- $150 59%
#99 FN- $110 1.59X

Wyatt Earp
#29 VG+ $12 82%

X-Men
#108 NM $154 1.4X
#134 NM $49 1.23X
#136 NM $59 1.68X
#141 NM $80 1.66X
#142 NM $49 1.23X

MARKET REPORTS

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Chicago was a lot of fun and profitable for Heroes and Dragons. Aside from the owner's usual large golden age sales, we did really well with alphabetical dollar books. We put a lot of time and effort into the stock and it was well received by **Wizard World** attendees. Personally, I had a great time at the show. I got to meet a lot of publishers and spoke with a ton of creators.

Spider-Man sales in the store are up. JMS has been really good for Amazing Spider-Man and this new Green Goblin story in PP: Spider-Man is getting a lot of attention. Ultimate Spider-Man is going strong, and I'm selling the first three TPBs like crazy.

I'm trying a couple of new sections in the store. One's devoted heavily to **Spider-Man TPBs** with some Daredevil and Hulk stuff thrown in to prime readers for more Marvel movies. Another is the "Mighty Marvel Illustrated Epics" which displays Essentials, Masterworks, and other historic Marvel collections. I have a similar section, "The Dawn of DC Comics" which is kind of the same thing only with DC Archives, the Superman and Batman dailies collections, and a few other Gold and Silver Age reprints. Finally, there's a section featuring EC reprints, Pogo reprints, the Alex Toth Zorro stuff from Image, Tin Tin, and just all sorts of great stuff that I feel is kind of essential to a well-rounded comics reader (whatever that is these days!). These sections are also doing very well.

I'm currently working very hard to keep a large variety of volumized TPBs in stock like Cerebus, Sandman, Strangers In Paradise, Preacher, etc. This stuff seems to sell great when people can pick up a few volumes at a time or they know they can come back for more and it'll be here.

Our **Manga** section is growing. Lone Wolf & Cub, Akira, DBZ, and Neon Genesis, Evangelion TPBs are our best sellers. They're easy to stock and easy to sell.

Since other chain stores have started carrying manga collections it's been a little easier to figure out what's selling. I try to carry what those places don't but there is still some overlap. Which, for the most part, has seemed to work out well for both businesses.

I hate to sound like a cliche, but Marvel books are doing REALLY, REALLY well here. DC, as always, is steady as can be. Bruce Wayne Murderer/Fugitive is running a little long, but my people are sticking with it, God bless 'em.

And finally, **nostalgia comics** like GI Joe and Transformers are out of control. I don't know why it's happening now but people are eating it up.

That gets you up to speed on how things are going in Columbia, SC. I hope this helps you out, and let me know if I can do anything else for you.

Robert Letscher II

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Greetings from sweltering Arizona!

At this moment, I am counting down the hours until the annual San Diego Comic-Con International with

much anticipation. It is always a huge show, and with the current market strength I expect record attendance. So, in my next report, hopefully I'll have some interesting sales/observations from the show.

Recently, **demand** has continued to remain strong for comic books across most eras and genres, despite punishing losses occurring in the stock market and other financial sectors. High-grade books in CGC "blue label" cases, (especially Silver Age/Bronze Age Marvels in 9.4 or higher) are bringing record prices on a frequent basis. I just noticed another example of this phenomenon the other day, at a major auction house: A Circle-8 copy of Journey Into Mystery #112 in CGC 9.4 commanded about $3,700 lately. That's over thirteen times the latest Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide value in that exact grade. (Shame it wasn't my book!) Seeing those types of results prompted me to slap my Circle-8 Copy of Sgt. Fury #13 on to eBay, (it was also a 9.4). It garnered no less than 25 bids, and closed at $2,551 (not counting shipping and insurance.) A respectable amount, and plenty profitable, but still a rather modest six times guide.

Demand for art from the Jack Adler Collection remains high, and with shrinking (fleeting!) supply, the prices continue to escalate. A few specific recent examples: All Star Western #11 Approval Cover $100; Batman #257 Hand-Colored Cover Art $300 trade; Brave & Bold #106 Hand-Colored Cover Art $200 trade; G. I. Combat #125 Approval Cover $127; Justice League Of America #104 Hand-Colored Cover Art $200 trade; Our Fighting Forces #133 Cover Color Separation $125; Superman #280 Hand-Colored Cover Art $250 trade.

Spider-Man has remained hot since before the movie hit theaters, and the most requested issues are his debut in Amazing Fantasy #15, and the Amazing issues #14, 16, 17, 23, 25, 40, 50, 100, 119, 120, 121, 122, 129, 136, 194, 252 and 300, while the current "Amazing" series is in much demand as well, especially issues numbered in the 30s. A few samples of the many recent Spidey sales: Amazing Spider-Man #119 FN $27, #122 VG $75, #128 NM- $43, #200 NM $31, #238 NM $75, #298 NM/MT $60, #299 NM/MT $30, #345-347 Set NM $23, #300 CGC NM/MT 9.8 White Pages $840; Amazing Spider-Man #36 (New Series) NM and NM+ fly at $35-40, and NM- copies at $20, faster than I can get 'em.

Does anyone else find it annoying that we all now have to take the time/effort to differentiate between **two numberings** with the same name? Leave the long-running titles' numbering systems alone, publishers! (Like there's not enough crossovers and mini-series and one-shots and annuals. Well, you get my drift?!) And as far as the way they honor their commitments: I look forward to hearing more about the progress of the **class-action suit** waged by some of the many hard-working retailers who have been victimized by Marvel's failure to declare returnable the books that shipped far too late, despite the contractual assurances that retailers expected to be honored, and rightfully should have been protected by. Talk about another example of Marvel biting the hand that feeds! But don't get me started on politics.

So back to the current exciting market conditions, which make me glad that over the last couple of decades I spent most of my money on older comics, and not other investments such as Enron, WorldCom, and their ilk (bilk?)!

Some specific **recent sales** include: Conan #1 FN $75, #3 VF $100; Fantastic Four #112 VF+ $95; Venom #1 (1st Series/Gold Ed.) CGC NM/MT 9.8 $275; Wolverine #10 CGC NM/MT 9.8 $150; X-Men #122 VF/NM $40, #143 CGC NM 9.4 $70.

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Hi y'all. Please make note of our **new address**, as by my greeting I am now a Texan. Well OK, I live in Texas.

San Diego was a busy one this year. Money was the same as always, but the amount of sales was tremendous. I was selling a lot of CHEAP stuff. Dollar books sold like crazy. I brought 12 boxes and came home with six (not so full) boxes. 50% off Marvel, DC, Gold Key/Dell, Archie and misc. were big sellers. Wall books were slow but I did sell a few. Marvel Tales #102 VG-FN $180 (priced at $220); Air Fighters V2 #6 VG $85 [priced at $125); Amazing Spider-Man #47 VF+ $45 (priced at $65). The best book I sold was to an auction house (to be unnamed), Fighting American #1 VF+ (thought by many to be a CGC 8.5) for $1300.

I believe the old comic market to be strong, but regular collectors want **good deals**. High grade late '60s/early '70s Marvels sold OK at 75% of Guide. Unfortunately I am not known as a "high-grade" dealer, so I do not get the big collectors into my booth. As always the con was FUN.

The **AACC annual dinner** was an excellent event as usual, although the auction was down in the amount of quality art donated for the event. The art display of Will Eisner & Lou Fine originals was incredible. If you are at San Diego and you are a Gold/Silver Age collector, then the dinner should be on your agenda.

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San Diego: On the bright side of the recent expansion of the convention center, you're definitely going to get some exercise attempting to see everything that is going on. Being a dealer it is almost impossible to try and cruise the artist alley or see any of the product being made from the mainstream and alternative companies and man your booth, even if you are not alone.

Once again there was a lot of positive energy from both dealers and collectors interested in the back issue market. I brought down quite a few more boxes of basic Silver and Bronze Age stock than I normally do, and by the time the show ended I was almost depleted of everything I put out to sell.

The Tuesday set-up proved once again to be **fairly profitable**. It allows dealers an extra day to pick up some goodies to take back to their booths, and hopefully fulfill some of their personal customer want lists. I enjoy the fact that there is plenty of time to dig through boxes and not have to run back to your booth, because once the doors opened on Wednesday evening for the early bird shoppers, it was pretty much non-stop people, questions and comic book happenings for the next four-and-a-half days.

I was able to purchase for myself another very nice Marvelmania poster, (Cap Goes Wild!) along with a wonderful Jack Kirby/Dick Ayers pre-hero monster page from JIM 72 (The GLOB!).

Representatives from The Mint, Heritage, Mastro and All Star **auctions** all had a very nice variety of comic books and related material on display. I heard a few grumblings from some regular comic dealers complaining about the auction houses taking away sales. They are the same ones who have complained about eBay, CGC and any other "innovation" that takes away their leverage with the general public.

Why should somebody sell something to a **dealer** for a fraction of what they could get, when they stand a much greater chance of maximizing their profit potential by putting it in an auction? Makes sense to me, but there are exceptions. Often some collector just needs to raise some quick cash to purchase something else at the con. If they come to you to attempt to sell, you should be fair and honest with them. They may have something else they might wish to sell in the future and establishing a good business relationship is very important now, not later. Remember, you only get one chance at making a good first impression.

Some **sales** at the convention: Amazing Spider-Man #1 G/VG $975; Fantastic Four #1 CGC GD $800; Tales to Astonish #27 CGC VG $400; Strange Adventures #6 CGC VF $600, #14 CGC VF/NM $600; Jon Juan CGC Fine+ $300; Sgt Fury #1 GD $100; Startling #50 CGC VF/NM $650; Adventure #59 GD/VG $300; Detective #127 CGC VF $400; Yellow Kid Mag #4 Fair $800; Tales of Suspense #39 Fair $100; Captain America #70 CGC VG+ $700; Marvel Mystery #57 CGC F/VF $600, #65 CGC VF $650; and lots and lots of one-, three-, five- and ten-dollar books.

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I have just returned from doing the **Wizard World** convention in **Chicago**. My sales were very good there due to some recently acquired Spider-Man comics and some original art by Steve Ditko. The majority of box sales were of low to mid grade 1970's Marvel and DC comics. I also sold a lot of the newer Spider-Man titles at $1.00 each. In May I set up at the **Motor City Con** and had average sales. The overall attendance for both shows seemed a little down. Sales of older forties through fifties books were much better at the Motor City convention than at Wizard World where Silver Age still rules. High-grade CGC books have been selling way above Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide but other CGC graded books are harder to sell for more than an un-slabbed book. Very cheap low-grade pre-hero Marvel/Atlas comics were selling well in Chicago. This years sales are good so far, but there is still some uncertainty about buying within the collecting community.

Some sales of note were:

GOLDEN AGE: Batman #1 CGC 2.0 $9600; Superman #2 CGC 3.5 $1500; Captain Marvel Adventures #3 CGC 5.5 $800, #116 FN- $75; Captain America #16 PR $320, #70 VG/FN $700; Wings #100 VG $50; Zoot #4 FA/G $85; Four Favorites #21 FN+ $112.

ATOMIC AGE: Zane Gray FC #197 FN $27; Mystic #6 VG $175; Adventures into Weird Worlds #27 VG/FN $95; Startling Terror Tales #10 GD+ $40; Rocky and his Friends FC #1208 GD/VG $35; March of Comics #69 VG $60; Donald Duck FC #233 VG $88.

SILVER AGE: X-Men #1 CGC 7.5 $3800, #8 GVG $45, #9 GVG $43, #14 GVG $36; Amazing Fantasy #15 PR $320; Amazing Spider-Man #22 GVG $35, #50 G $56; Tales to

Astonish #8 G $40; Showcase #38 VG $90, #55 VF $150; Daredevil #9 FN/VF $34; Iron Man #6 VF $20; Wonder Woman #117 FN $56, #93 GVG $48; My Greatest Adventure #81 VF/NM $150.

MAGAZINES, etc.: Eerie #25 VF/NM $25, #40 FN $10; Creepy #29 VF/NM $25; Vampirella #4 FN/VF $35, #6 FN+ $30, #48 NM $26; Spirit #8 VF $8; Marilyn's Life Story GD- $30; Snafu #2 VG/FN $40.

Jeff Rader

Offbeat-Archives

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Due to an impending move I had to **cancel** my Convention plans at almost the last minute. While everybody else was at the Con, that did give me the opportunity to keep an eye on the online home front, though. I had expected eBay sales to take a dip but they actually remained strong across the board.

Here are a few **sales** since the last time I checked in with you. I sold a 1966 Avengers #4 Golden Record Comic set in stunning Near Mint for $189; a run of Battle of the Planets #3-#10 ranging between VF - NM closed at $256 with some fervent bidding and a very excited winner; a lucky buyer got a bargain on a scarce Captain Flash #1 with gorgeous white pages for $177; a run of the second series of The Flame from Ajax #5 (#1), #2 & #3 went to different homes for $202, $114 & $52 respectively; a beautiful copy of Flying Cadet #17 with a bare-breasted woman cover ended up in a happy bidder's hands for about 2.5 X Guide at $243; a near perfect, white-page copy of It's Fun to Stay Alive, a giveaway with Bugs Bunny from 1948, ended at $112; I finally cut my VF+ Jon Juan #1 loose and was more than happy with the over-Guide $666; my Uncle Scrooge the Lemonade King found a great home for $43; a VG copy of Li'l Abner & the Creatures From Drop-Outer Space (cover-to-cover Frazetta) ended at $102; a VG copy of the Dell Movie Comics The Mad Monster Party went for $29 (It seems that this book has quite a few fans, in ANY grade. I haven't seen any real bargains on this one in a while).

Here is one that caught me a bit off guard: after a bit of frenzied bidding I sold a nice looking Fine copy of Monkeyshines #19 (Overstreet still has not listed this as containing a Frazetta story) for $84!!

The kicker was when the under bidder contacted me to ask if I would let him know if the high bidder backed out of the deal (he didn't). I had an extra copy and sold it to the happy under-bidder. A VF+ copy of Muggsy Mouse #2 (A-1 #36) with a crazy racist cover closed out at double Guide at $109. A VF (easily!) copy of Negro Heroes #1 sold for $471, a bargain for such a gorgeous scarce book. The Profit, an early underground by Joel Beck from 1966, went for $64. A FN+ Showgirls #1, with some nice DeCarlo good girl art, ended at $99. Last, but not least, was a rare low-grade Canadian Zoot #13 that contained a Blue Beetle cover and stories for $41. It looks like some of these obscure Canadian books are finally coming in to their own!

From the **purchasing** angle I have grabbed quite a few nice books lately. Here are just a couple. After years of desperate searching I finally landed a copy of the impossible-to-find It Rhymes With Lust digest by Matt Baker. For more on this book check back in on CBM #73, I couldn't possibly extol its virtues any better than Jeff Gelb managed to. I found a great, unlisted book from 1949 that has a great Superman parody ("Supergoon") a few years before Mad took a stab at it. Does anybody else know of any other pre-Mad Superman parodies other than this and possibly Sun Fun Komiks?

Ebay Watch: A buyer, Steve Meyer, latched on to an ultra-rare 1939 World's Fair bound volume of Tip Top Comics #1-#12 for $3700. The downside of this was that he had to immediately put the aforementioned Jon Juan #1 back on the market, sale pending as I type. One seller just sold what was purported to be a couple of print negatives used to print Batman #1. The negatives included the splash page and the ad page for Detective #40—an interesting piece of history for $167. Get a load of this one, a Good (yes, Good) copy of Wham-O Giant Comics sold for $150?! I thought that this might just have been a fluke but a week later a Poor copy sold for $25. Looks like this might just be a book to keep your eyes on.

No report would be complete without an example of **CGC** madness. How about a 9.4 copy of My Love #1 for $1084, with Guide at $55 for NM 9.4? There was also a copy of Daredevil #4, with a story page missing, graded by CGC as an unqualified VG- 3.5, though noted as being incomplete on the label. Thankfully the seller was prudent enough to pull it before the auction closed.

Until next time...

Mike Tierney

Collector's Edition

cbsrock@swbell.net

The summer of 2002 will be remembered for the success of the top grossing **Spider-Man movie**. But it hasn't been a phenomenon like the Batman craze in 1989. Spider-Man could have been the top selling new comic of the year—had the earlier issues of the Ultimate Spider-Man,

easily the best quality run of Spider-Man comics in some time, been available. Once again, we've seen the pattern of new readers trying the Nineties Spider-Man, only to quickly lose interest. You have to wonder how many millions of dollars Marvel has never seen, thanks to their short-term thinking of no overprinting. Consumers are turning to look at books about other movie characters in the works, which include Marvel characters like Daredevil and the Incredible Hulk, which are also unavailable for reorders. Somewhere, the publishers of Transformers (which outsold everything from both Marvel and DC in the last year—with three printings so far) and other Eighties revival books are probably saying "Thank you!"

Spider-Man comics from before the Nineties are another matter. **Examples** are Amazing Spiderman #58 FN $23, #37 VF $200, #79 VF+ $22, #289 NM $22, #300 NM $70; Annual #4 FN+ $35; Spectacular Spider-Man #1 VF+ $39; Web of Spider-Man #1 MT $15; Avengers #4 (1st SA Captain America) VG $300; Captain America #100 GD $25; Daredevil #40 NM $28; Fantastic Four #38 VF $40, #45 (1st Inhumans) FN- $25, #80 FN $18; Tales to Astonish #79 VF $28, #91 VG+ $21; Wolverine (V2) #1 FN+ $25; X-Men GD #11 $25, #20 FN+ $85.

Batman led the way for DC sales from the same time period. Batman #136 FN+ $29, #145 VG $24, #151 FN+ $23, #160 VG+ $18, #169 (2nd SA Penguin) FN+ $42; Detective Comics #328 FN $28, #358 FN+ $25; Worlds Finest #228 VF+ NM $28.

Interest was strong in older non-super-heroes comics as well, specifically war and westerns. A couple of older examples are Battlefront #2 VG+ $19 and Classics Illustrated #129 (Davy Crocket) 1st PRT VF $39. From the Eighties Transformers and G.I. Joe are flying out the door at Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide prices.

Overall, independent comics may ultimately end up being this year's big winner.

Greg White

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Welcome to wet and still humid Central Florida. The summer months were slow. Back issues had a quiet month. We purchased quite a few collections this month. Now if only the comics would sell as quickly as I purchase them!

San Diego 2002 was a moderate success. Original comic art and slabbed comics were still grossly overpriced, however lesser items ($50-$500 range) sold well. Thankfully there are still many collectors who have not sold out to the slabbing madness.

What can be said about the **original comic art** prices? Marvel and DC Silver Age art was at prices I had never seen. Of course I did not see one of these overpriced pieces sell. One well-known dealer had a Romita ASM cover that he priced at $50,000. Another lesser-known dealer had a couple of Buscema Silver Surfer covers that were priced at $20,000. Please! If these fellows do not want to sell the art just leave it at home. Since when did San Diego become a museum?

As is the case each year there was less emphasis on vintage comic books and more attention paid to recent and current product. It saddens me to see this **trend**. Why don't we just break off from San Diego Con and run a vintage-only show once a year in California? I am tired of seeing table after table of posters, action figures, toys etc.

SILVER AGE (1956-1969): We recently purchased groups of Marvel and Gold Key. No DC collections have come in lately. We need to restock on most popular DC titles from this period. Sales were slow last month. There was demand for a few key books but most titles sat. DC Wonder Woman was one exception—we sold a couple dozen this month! Silver Age Sales: Star Trek #1 FN $100; Amazing Spiderman #14 GD $75; Batman Annual #1 FN $150; Wonder Woman #105 NM $800.

GOLDEN AGE (1935-1955): We have spent many dollars recently on books from this period. Runs of Batman, Worlds Finest and Human Torch have come in. We also purchased a large pre-1950 Disney group of comics. Now I have to get these issues prepared for sale and find homes for most of these books. Many golden age books still will not sell at full Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. It will be interesting to see how I do with these new additions. Demand continues for origin and first appearance issues. Unrestored high-grade copies of these books very rarely come in. The Overstreet Guide really needs to address the issue of restored golden age soon. Golden Age Sales: Batman #8 VG $550; Four Color #159 VF $250; Human Torch #10 G $150; Archie #10 F $25; Superman #39 VF $300.

TOYS, ORIGINAL ART & DISNEYANA: We purchased a large group of Disney animation drawings—nothing exceptional but it will fill out our selection. Two Peanuts daily strips also came our way this month. Demand continues for silver age Marvel & DC art. Not

much comes in. A large BLB collection was offered to us last week, however the owner insisted on full retail—a nice group that we had to pass on. Three boxed Aurora model kits came in along with a nice Lesney Matchbox collection. Recent Sales: Mr. Smee animation drawing $50; Frazetta pencil sketch $600; Dracula Aurora still sealed in box $400; 1941 Bambi china dish $150.

That will wrap up our month. When visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello.

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It's over! The largest comic book convention within the borders of the US has been over a week and we are still rebuilding the store inventory! We exhibited at the show under the "Gold and Silver Age Pavilion" and held fast to retailing comic book back issues (no trendy or closeout store merchandise). Even in this worrisome economy, that turned out to be a profitable decision. Back issue comic book buyers searched for everything from the old to the new with a fervor that laid doubt to the state of the economy. As usual, we were hard-pressed to discern any unpredictable new trends in comics sales. The usual gang of suspects were highly sought after—Marvel Silver and Bronze **keys**, Hulk and Daredevil comics (pre-movie interest) and high-grade anything!

List-fillers, men and women filling in comic runs or matching our stock against their written wants, were comforting. Their presence at our booth bolsters the sales of our common, sometimes-ignored back issues. A couple of surprises: numerous requests for **Fawcett** back issues—up from the number of requests at previous conventions—and the number of requests and sales of Tomb Of Dracula was a surprise. Lots of sales and requests. In fact, all the Marvel "monster" titles and horror reprints were in demand and sold frequently. **CrossGen** back issues were in great demand. We were stocked and sold quite a few. I feel the mounting positive attention CrossGen is garnering is a credit to their determination to succeed. Consequently, my increased sales can be partially attributed to the growing league of CrossGen followers.

On the downside, several sales constants were weak. War comics and that perennial favorite, Wonder Woman, moved slower than normal. **CGC** was oft discussed. Pro and con comments were about even. Signifying that CGC will remain prevalent and viable. The "Not Near Mint enough" crowd employed new tactics while shopping for high-grade comics. The question: "Do you have anything in 9.6 or higher?" was heard occasionally. Now, I have customers that have reduced my inventory to quotients. The fraction at the top of a CGC slab is more desirable than the contents of that same slab.

Comments about CGC:

"The grading has slacked recently."

"I won't buy a comic unless CGC has graded it."

"What were those guys thinking?!"

"They are usually off half a grade."

"It came back as a 9.something. I expected it to be higher."

"I know if it's restored or not" etcetera.

Golden Age Sales: All Top #14 GD $207, #15 G/VG $150; Big Town #14 FN $41; Black Terror #20 FN- $130; Daring Mystery Adventures #5 G/VG $475; Dorothy Lamour #2 F/VF $157; Ghost Comics #2 VG $78; Katy Keene #5 FN $120; Leading Comics (Mile High copy) #12 CGC 8.0 VF $700; Our Army at War #1 G/VG $225; Out of the Shadows #7 VG $65; Superman #3 CGC 5.5 FN- $1700; Uncle Scrooge F.C. #386 GD $85; Wonder Comics #13 GD $57, #19 VG $120.

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spiderman #1 CGC 8.0 VF $9350, #3 CGC 7.5 VF- $1700, #49 F/VF $60, #50 F/VF $250, #99 NM $40; Batman #200 NM CGC 9.4 $300; Captain America #110 VF+ $42; Daredevil #2 VG/F $105, #5 VF+ $175; HR Puf N Stuf #1 CGC 9.6 NM $250; Hulk #5 VG $153; Incredible Hulk #181 VF- $700, #181 F/VF $400; Justice League of America #13 VF $135, #19 VF+ $120; Metal Men #2 VF $130, #3 VF+ $100; Mystery Tales #15 FN- $90; Silver Surfer #1 CGC 8.5 VF+ $450; Strange Adventures #205 F/VF $50; Strange Tales #114 VF- $200; X-Men #7 F/VF $163.

Bronze Age Sales: Amazing Spiderman #129 FN $60, #135 NM $65, #194 NM $25; Giant-Size Spiderman #2 NM $24; Incredible Hulk #180 NM $120, #181 VF- $700, #181 F/VF $400; Witzend #1 NM- $75; X-Men #96 VF $70, #117 NM $45, #119 NM $60, #120 NM- $70; Witzend #1 NM- $75.

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

THE NAIMAN REPORT

[continued from page 72]

heart of San Diego's Balboa Park. (Don't miss this eatery the next time you come to SD. The view is spectacular and the food top notch!) It was a memorable event for all attendees. Kudos to Mick Rabin (and his ever tolerant and patient wife, Pam) for putting in 48 hours of around-the-clock efforts to make this an Event to Remember.

All you DC collectors can say Sayonara to one of the all time best **comic book collections** ever to be assembled. Collectors from The Land of the Rising Sun have completed a purchase of a world-renowned West Coast assemblage of Golden and Silver Age books. Featured amongst these are some of the best Mile High examples as well as "The" Showcase #4 that puts all others to shame. Sad to see these comics leave our shores, but apparently now was the time for these folks to get out of the hobby. Money speaks!

Up, up and away goes the Nicolas Cage collection! Collected over an extended hobby lifetime of two or three weeks, this highly touted Big Name collection is finally coming to the marketplace! Now that his role as Superman has exploded like the planet Krypton, this force-fed collection goes the way of many former celebrity trophies. Anyone remember the Leonardo DiCaprio Collection?

Feel free to contact me with whatever comes across your desk! Confidentiality guaranteed. Out!

CGC Q&A

[continued from page 71]

it is not so obvious when the combinations are close, like "Off-white to White Pages." Again, does that mean the edges are "Off-white" and the interior part is "White," or is that part of the scale you use, meaning better than "Off-white" but not quite "White" for the entire page?

Regards,
West Stephan

[CGC: West, you have answered the question for us. Whenever there is a "split" page quality like "Off-white to White" pages it means that the edges are the first color mentioned and the center is the second color mentioned. We feel that the "split" page quality is the best way for the buyer to visualize the page quality instead of giving it just one color/shade. CGC would be doing a disservice to the consumer if the edges of the pages were cream and the center was off-white by only calling the pages "Cream" while at the same time giving pages that were cream all over the same designation.]

THE GREATEST COMIC BOOK EVER

[continued from page 14]

thing I had ever seen. By the end of the second page, I was completely won over by the complexity and intelligence of the Sub-Mariner. I laughed out loud when, confronted by a revolving door, he simply destroys it and walks through to the lobby of an office building.

A few panels later is the one that threw me for a loop the first time I read it. As the law firm of Nelson and Murdock look out through the hole in the wall created by the Sub-Mariner's exit, they each have something to say about what has just happened. Somehow, their comments seemed a little more rooted in the real world, closer to what real people would say after such a strange confrontation. This was a revelation to me. For some reason I flipped back to the cover and I suddenly realized what had struck me as odd when I first saw the cover: the newspaper headline was that of a NEW YORK newspaper. This stuff, inside the book, could be happening right now, in the real world.

This was a major event for me. As fanciful as the story was, as crazy as the whole setting seemed to be, it still was heavily rooted in a reality that could be happening in a city I knew, that was a couple of hundred miles away. There were no multiple Earths; there were no Guardians from another planet. Here was a story that could be happening in the very same New York that had the current World's Fair!

My prior experiences with Marvel had been minimal, but I did know that Daredevil was supposed to have a yellow costume. I was so caught up in the story, that I never gave that a second thought. With little fanfare and only a cursory acknowledgement, Daredevil tells us quickly he has worked for months to redesign the costume, but never expected to wear it against such a fantastic foe. The costume change was not even announced on the cover, it simply appeared. This seemed a very low-key introduction of a major change for the normally aggressive and self-serving Marvel.

The significance of the unannounced costume change, along with the crossover with the Sub-Mariner, has made this issue a favorite with collectors and investors alike. Right now, according to Jamie Newbold over at Southern California Comics, this issue is especially hot as anticipation for the Daredevil movie grows. He is having a hard time finding enough issues for his customers. Lastly, the issue is a tremendous showcase for the talents of Wally Wood. He has shown us a Daredevil that moves with grace and skill. There is the feeling of a real acrobat inside the new costume.

For an 11-year-old paperboy in Cleveland, the issue was important because he learned to not prejudge a comic until he had given it a fair chance. After reading this issue, I never turned down a stack of Marvels again.

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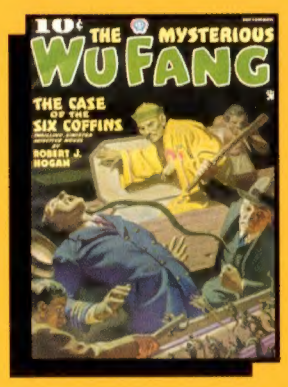
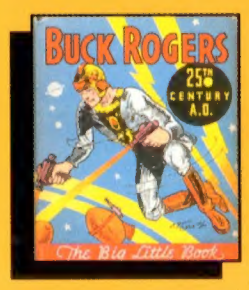
GOLDEN AGE COMICS





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This section will fill you in on all the important goings-on in the comic and collecting industries.

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The Main Event

This is where you'll find your new feature articles. These are the lead stories that get to the heart of current trends and sizzling news.

Catch the Wave

Here we'll focus on new products that any savvy collector would find of interest. They might not be trends yet, but keep alert! If it's new and different, this is the place to explore it.

Did You Know...?

This is the section for the lover of nostalgia - particularly obscure nostalgia. We'll report on the toys, characters, clubs and other things that had their hey-day, disappeared for a while, and are finally regaining popularity.

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In this section, we'll give an in-depth profile of a Star Collector.

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